

The unsung hero of the '24 Senators

Alexandria's Sally Z. Harper remembers her baseball-playing father

BY DENISE DUNBAR

The Washington Nationals are vying for just the second World Series title in D.C. history. Fans eagerly await the Nationals' first home game of the 2019 fall classic Friday night as the team attempts to emulate the 1924 Washington Senators, winners over the New York Giants in seven thrilling games.

Many fans know that aging Walter Johnson, one of the greatest pitchers in major league baseball history, won game seven in relief after losing his two starts earlier in the '24 series. Others are familiar with Leon Allen "Goose" Goslin, the Senators' young slugging left fielder; 34-year-old Sam Rice, their stellar right fielder; and Bucky Harris, the young player-manager second baseman – all of whom were destined for the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Fewer people recall the pitching hero of that series, an unassuming lefty from North Carolina named Tom Zachary, who won both of his starts, came within one out of tossing two complete games and pitched to a 2.04 run average against the Giants.

However, there's one longtime Alexandria resident who recalls Zachary quite well: Sally Z. Harper. To her, Zachary was simply "Daddy."

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PHOTO/DENISE DUNBAR

Sally Z. Harper with her father's 1924 World Series watch fob, outside her Alexandria home.

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Zachary's major league baseball career spanned 18 seasons, from 1918 to 1936. He's best known for his three World Series victories, his 186 career wins, for holding the record for the most wins in a season without a defeat – 12 – and for surrendering Babe Ruth's 60th home run in 1927.

Harper was born a few years after Zachary's baseball career ended. Zachary and his wife, Etta, had returned to Graham, North Carolina, where Zachary assumed the life of a gentleman tobacco farmer, when Harper was born.

"He became a country gentleman where he dressed every day in his khakis, and he was a hunter, and he had bird dogs," Harper said.

"He would go to tobacco markets sometimes. And sometimes I would go with him, when I was three or four years old. They would weigh the tobacco, then they would

weigh me," she laughed. "He and I were big buddies."

Harper has the pocket watch fob that was given to Washington Senators players on that World Series winning 1924 team.

"They didn't have rings. In 1924 they got a watch fob," Harper said. "He wore it as a watch fob. And mother, she had a bar with rubies on it and she wore it. She wore it all the time on suits and stuff like that. I'm a real estate agent and actually I have worn it to the million dollar, top producer parties."

Harper is eager for her father to receive the recognition she believes he's due, including enshrinement in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Early years

Jonathan Thompson Zachary was the third of 13 children born to Quaker cotton farmers in Saxapahaw – a village on the outskirts of Graham – in May 1896. After

high school, young Tom went to Guilford College, which was then a Quaker school.

"Quakers believe in education," Sally Harper said, in explaining how a farming family could send one of 13 children to college. "And actually, he educated his siblings below him."

Harper said she's not sure how her father got involved in baseball, but he was a star at Guilford. He served as team captain in 1918, according to the Society of American Baseball Research. He was eventually elected to the Guilford College Hall of Fame, as well as the North Carolina Hall of Fame.

"I didn't lose many," was how Zachary once described his college pitching career to the Burlington Daily Times-News.

In the summer of 1918, Zachary prepared to ship out to France to serve in the Red

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Cross during World War I. He wound up with a multiple week layover in Philadelphia, so he went to the office of Philadelphia A's manager Connie Mack, asked for and received a tryout.

"I pitched in two games [for the A's], didn't finish them, but got credit for two wins," Zachary said in a 1959 interview with the Charlotte Observer.

Adding a dash of mystery to the tale, Zachary pitched under an assumed name for the A's: "Zach Walton."

"It was not as hard to do as

it would be today," John Odell, curator of history and research at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, said. "He wanted to maintain his [college] athletic eligibility. He got scouted and had the opportunity to play a few games and see how he might compete with those guys. He was 22."

"Then I went overseas, stayed a year, came back and contacted him [Connie Mack] again," Zachary told the Charlotte Observer. "He didn't make me much of an offer, so I got in touch with Clark Griffith of the Senators."

Washington was at that

time the closest big league team to his North Carolina home. When he reached Griffith, who was then the Senators' manager but would later buy the team, he was told to come to Griffith's hotel the next morning. Being a country boy, Zachary arrived at 6 a.m.

"Aroused from a sound

sleep, Griffith answered in his nightgown, signed Tom to a contract and invited him to stay for breakfast, which he did," Bill Hunter of the Burlington Times-News wrote in 1969, soon after Zachary's death from a stroke.

"He signed me and that was the beginning of the fin-

est association I ever had in baseball," Zachary told the Charlotte Observer. "I was with six big league teams during my career, but I enjoyed playing for Griff more than any of them. I told him that at an Old-Timers re-

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**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
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The second half 2019 real estate tax, refuse fee and stormwater utility fee must be paid by November 15, 2019, to avoid late payment penalty and interest.

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Real estate tax information is available on the City's website at alexandriava.gov/RealEstateTax. Under Additional Resources, the Real Estate Tax History and Payments link provides detailed tax balances and payments.

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The Finance Department is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A drop box located on the Royal Street side of City Hall is available 24 hours a day. (Payments must be in the drop box by midnight on November 15, 2019 to be considered on time.)

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BOX SCORE TELLS STORY OF SECOND GREAT GAME:
The official box score follows:

	Ab.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
New York	3	0	1	0	7	0
Lindstrom, 3b	3	1	1	2	2	0
Frish, 2b	4	0	1	0	0	0
Young, rf	3	2	1	14	1	0
Kelly, 1b	4	0	1	1	0	0
Meusel, lf	4	0	1	0	0	0
Wilson, cf	4	0	0	1	2	0
Jackson, ss	3	0	0	6	2	0
Gowdy, c	3	0	0	1	2	0
Bentley, p	3	0	0	1	2	0
Totals	31	3	6x25	16	0	0
	Ab.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Washington	4	0	0	0	0	0
McNeely, cf	3	1	1	3	5	1
Harris, 2b	3	1	2	4	0	0
Rice, rf	4	1	1	1	0	0
Goslin, lf	2	1	1	15	0	0
Judge, 1b	3	0	0	0	5	0
Bluege, 3b	4	0	1	2	6	0
Peck, ss	3	0	0	1	0	0
Ruel, c	2	0	0	1	2	0
Zachary, p	2	0	0	1	2	0
Marberry, p	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	28	4	6	27	18	1

One out when winning run scored.
New York 000 000 102—3
Washington ... 200 010 001—4
Home runs: Goslin, Harris.
Stolen bases, Rice. Sacrifices: Rice, Bluege. Double plays: Bluege to Harris to Judge (2); Harris to Peck to Judge. Left on bases: New York 4; Washington 5. Base on balls: off Zachary); off Zachary, Judge.

COURTESY PHOTO

Box score from Game 2 of the 1924 World Series, won 4-3 by Tom Zachary of the Washington Senators.



COURTESY PHOTO

Photos of Zachary in the uniforms of (left to right): the Boston Braves, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Yankees. Zachary pitched for those teams, and the Philadelphia Phillies, during the last eight years of his career, from 1928 to 1936.

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union in Washington in 1949 and he might near cried it pleased him so.”

The Senators years

When Zachary signed with the Senators in 1919, he went straight to the big leagues, never throwing a pitch in the minors. He spent all or part of nine seasons in D.C., pitching

to an overall record of 96-103 and an earned run average of 3.78.

Zachary’s stats were up and down year-to-year. For instance, in 1922 he had a .600 winning percentage, followed by .385 in 1923 – likely a combination of playing for bad teams those early years in D.C. and being a fitness pitcher with little margin for error.

“He wasn’t a big fastball pitcher,” Odell said. “He mixed in curveballs and off-speed stuff with his fastballs ... and kept you off balance and kept you guessing. ... You never knew what pitch was coming next.”

“Control was my strongest point,” Zachary told the Greensboro Daily News in 1966. “I wasn’t as fast as some, but had enough to get by. I threw a knuckleball which broke more like a spitball.”

1924 and the World Series

Zachary had one of his finest all-around seasons in 1924, on the mound and at the plate.

He went 15-9 with a 2.75 ERA, threw 202 innings and collected two saves. Always an above-average hitter for a pitcher – dating back to his

Guilford days when he played outfield on days he wasn’t pitching – Zachary hit .306 with a .351 on base percentage in 1924, according to Baseball Reference.

Like the 2019 Nationals, who battled back from a 19-31 record in late May, the 1924 Washington Senators were under .500, at 17-19, at the end of May and stuck in fifth place in the American League. A World Series berth seemed about as unlikely then for the underfinanced Senators as it did this year for the injured and underperforming Nationals.

Both teams began putting things together in June, staved off late challenges from also-hot teams and wound up with almost identical win totals: 93 for this year’s Nationals (in 162 games) and 92 for the 1924 Senators (in 154 games).

As Johnson and Zachary were the Senators’ two best starters in ’24, it’s no surprise that they started the first two games of the World Series against the Giants. In Game 1, Johnson took the loss in a tight 4-3 game, despite pitching all 12 innings

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and striking out 12 batters.

It fell to Zachary in Game 2 to prevent the Senators from falling into a 2-0 hole in the series, and he was up to the task, hurling 8 2/3 innings in an identical 4-3 game, but with the Senators on top. The Giants took two of the next three games and held a 3-2 series lead heading into Game 6.

The Giants were one game from claiming the series when Washington sent Zachary back to the mound with their season literally on the line. He responded with a masterpiece: a 9-inning complete game, 2-1 victory. Zachary gave up one run in the first, the Senators plated two in the fifth and Zachary made those runs stand up.

“Zachary, after a shaky first inning, when the Giants scored their only run ... weaved a magic spell over the Giants’ bats that had volleyed

and thundered base hits yesterday,” Edward E. Britton wrote of the game. “Instead of Johnson’s fastball, on which they had thrived, the Giants had Zachary’s slow curves and tantalizing floaters to contend with today and they made no effective headway against them.”

Legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice was similarly poetic in describing Zachary’s game six effort.

“Zachary was the incarnation of steadiness, working smoothly, easily and deftly, suppressing each Giant attack with his magnificent control and a baffling change of pace.”

The Senators claimed Washington’s one and only World Series championship in the next game.

Zachary and The Babe

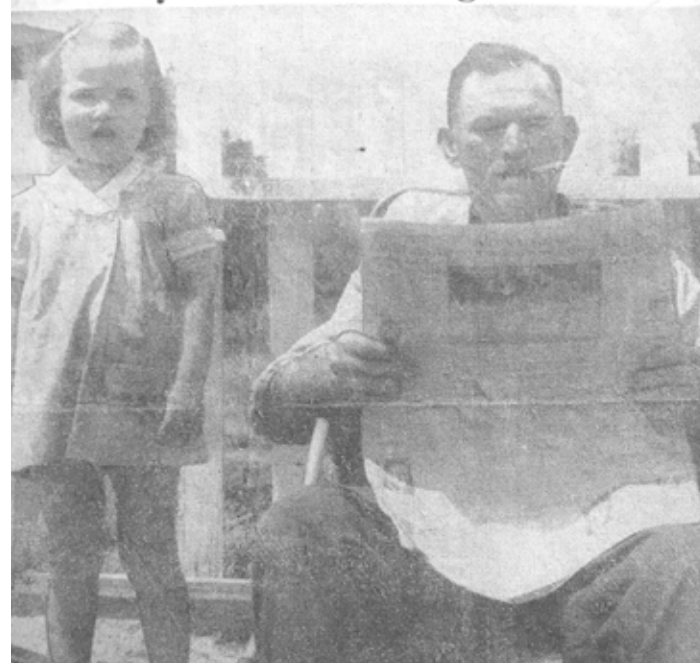
The other most noted event in Zachary’s career was his faceoff with the legendary Babe Ruth. When Zach-

ary took the mound against the Yankees on Sept. 30, 1927, Ruth was at 59 home runs for the season. The Babe needed one more blast for 60 to set a new record for most homers in a season.

Ruth walked in the first inning, singled in the fourth and singled again in the sixth, according to SABR. But when Ruth came up in the eighth inning, he hit a towering blast down the first base line that went right over the foul pole. It was ruled a home run, though Zachary half-jokingly claimed it was foul for the rest of his career.

“Every once in a while, when they show this home run there’s a very short part of the film where they show [Zachary] on the mound, and he’s going like this [waves arms gesturing foul],” John “Jigger” Harper, Sally’s husband, said. “He’s indicating it’s foul. But he thought that

ong Our Neighbors ...
om Zachary, Former Big League Star,
Lets Sally Do the Pitching For Him No



PHOTO/DENISE DUNBAR

Top: The official team photo of the 1924 World Series winning Washington Senators. Tom Zachary, who won two games in the Series, is on the left end of the first row.

Bottom: Sally Zachary, age 3, and her father, former major league pitcher Tom Zachary, in a story from the Greensboro Daily News.

SPORTS

ALEXANDRIA
SPORTS ROUNDUP

The Alexandria Times sports roundup includes records and game results for the prior week in two sports per season for Alexandria's four local high schools: Bishop Ireton, Episcopal, St. Stephen's and St. Agnes and T.C. Williams. Records will be presented alphabetically, while results will be listed by date.

This fall, the sports included are boys' football and girls' volleyball. We will also be running photos with captions from games and encourage readers to send timely photos for submission to mschrott@alextimes.com. We will also continue covering games from various sports, as well as running sports features about Alexandria athletes.

BOYS' FOOTBALL

School	Record
Bishop Ireton	3-4
Episcopal	3-3
SSSAS	4-4
T.C. Williams	6-2

Scores this week:

Oct. 18

B.I. L 55-0 @ St Mary's Ryken
T.C. Williams W 60-18 vs. Hayfield

Oct. 19

Episcopal L 36-19 vs. Bullis
SSSAS W 21-14 vs. St. Albans

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

School	Record
Bishop Ireton	15-9
Episcopal	12-8
SSSAS	5-12-1
T.C. Williams	9-11

Scores this week:

Oct. 15

B.I. W 3-2 vs. St Mary's
Ryken

Oct. 16

Episcopal W 3-0 vs. Sidwell
Friends

Oct. 17

B.I. L 3-0 @ Academy of the

Holy Cross

Episcopal L 3-0 @ Flint Hill
SSSAS W 3-0 vs. Middle-

burg Academy

T.C. Williams W 3-1 vs. West
Potomac

Oct. 19

Episcopal W 3-1 vs. Paul VI



COURTESY PHOTO



PHOTO/DENISE DUNBAR

Left: Tom Zachary, gentleman farmer, in front of his Graham, North Carolina home.

Right: John "Jigger" Harper and Sally Z. Harper in their Alexandria home.

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because it was the 60th home run, that the umpires were going to give Ruth a break and allow it to be a home run and not foul."

The next season, Zachary went to the Yankees on a waiver claim and became a teammate, and friend, of Ruth.

The ball from that home run is on permanent display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York. Years later, Zachary reflected on giving up that famous homer.

"I used to resent it, but it's all right now," Zachary told the Greensboro Daily News in 1966. "It's been so long ago. I ask a lot of folks if they had ever heard of the number of times I struck out Babe Ruth. I read somewhere that Ruth said I was one of the toughest pitchers he ever had to hit at."

The last time Zachary saw Ruth was at an Old Timer's game in 1947 in New York, a few months before Ruth's death from cancer.

"He saw me smiling as Mel Allen, the announcer, mentioned that home run. The Babe swore at me good-naturedly, 'You left-handed son-of-a gun,' he said. 'You still think that was a foul ball, don't you?'" Zachary told the Greensboro Daily News.

The Burlington Times-

News described Zachary's poignant response.

"... looking at the ravaged body of Ruth, who was to die three months later, [Zachary] returned Babe's glare and replied, 'No, Babe, it was fair.'"

Late career

Zachary had a bit of a career resurgence after joining the Yankees in 1928, winning one game in the World Series that fall against the St. Louis Cardinals.

In 1929, Zachary went 12-0 for the Yankees, which still stands as the record for the most wins in a season without a loss for a pitcher who's made at least 20 appearances. He pitched for six more seasons with the Braves, Brooklyn Dodgers and Philadelphia Phillies, before retiring in 1936.

Retirement

Zachary invested some of his baseball earnings in tobacco farms back in his native North Carolina during his playing days. He settled easily into the role of gentleman farmer upon retiring.

"We didn't live on any of the tobacco farms," Sally Harper said, "but he would go out there during the day and make sure they were doing everything OK."

Harper also said her father remained true to his

Quaker roots even though their family joined a Presbyterian church after returning to North Carolina.

"The Presbyterian Church was more social and my mother liked it better. ... And Daddy never missed a Sunday of Sunday School," Harper said. "But the church was not where he liked to sit to hear a sermon. ... Sometimes after Sunday School, he and I would hop in the car and drive down to the Meeting House ... the Quaker church he'd grown up with."

Harper said there were other benefits to having a father who was retired.

"At the beginning of school, you had room mothers and I'd raise my hand and say, 'My dad can be a room daddy,'" Harper said. "... He and I were pretty close."

Zachary continued to follow baseball in his retirement. Harper said her father had radios in the house and on the porch, and that he liked to lounge in his hammock in the front yard and listen to baseball.

Zachary talked with the Charlotte Observer in 1959 about the people he got to know during his baseball career.

"Yes sir," said Tom Zachary, a happy sound to his voice, "I knew some real princes."

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