



AP PHOTO/MARTY LEDERHANDLER

Zsa Zsa Gabor and Anthony Herrera rehearse for "As the World Turns" in 1981.

# AS HIS WORLD TURNED

Anthony Herrera's illustrious career, love of Mississippi culture and ultimate role in the fight for his life

BY HANK BURDINE

To thousands, maybe even millions, he was a rascal, a scoundrel, a womanizer and a lover. He was hated by some, yet loved by all. Yes, there were those that loved to hate him.

**A**nthony Herrera lived a life of national and international fame. Soap opera star emeritus, Anthony played the role of James Stenbeck on "As the World Turns" off and on for almost 30 years. He was presumed dead five or six times, yet somehow managed to escape death to return another season in another episode, to ravage and rampage the silver screen during the midday hour. There were those that would arrange their work schedules to watch the soaps, and "As the World Turns" was one of the tops.



*Anthony had come to Greenville in the early '80s, attended parties where he wowed the ladies with his good looks and his Southern flair. When taken to Doe's Eat Place, some would rush up to hug him while others scorned him for his villainous roles.*



Herrera in 1982 at a No Name dinner club party with Gloria Virden, an unknown admirer (there were many) and Ferd Moyse III.

Anthony was born the oldest of six children in Wiggins, Mississippi, on January 19, 1944. He went to college at Ole Miss where he studied zoology and literature earning a dual major while a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity and moonlighting as a houseboy at the Tri-Delt sorority house. He visited the Delta with frat brothers and grew to love the flat land with its panoramic vistas and cultural, literary and art heritage...and the blues. During the summer months he moved to Greenwood where he teamed up with Deltans Walter Pillow and Stewart Bridgforth checking cotton for bugs while working for Farmer's Supply. He became lifelong friends with future cotton broker Emmett Chassaniol visiting with him on many occasions. Chassaniol has said, "Even though he was from South Mississippi, Anthony loved the Delta and its people. He would come and visit every chance he had."

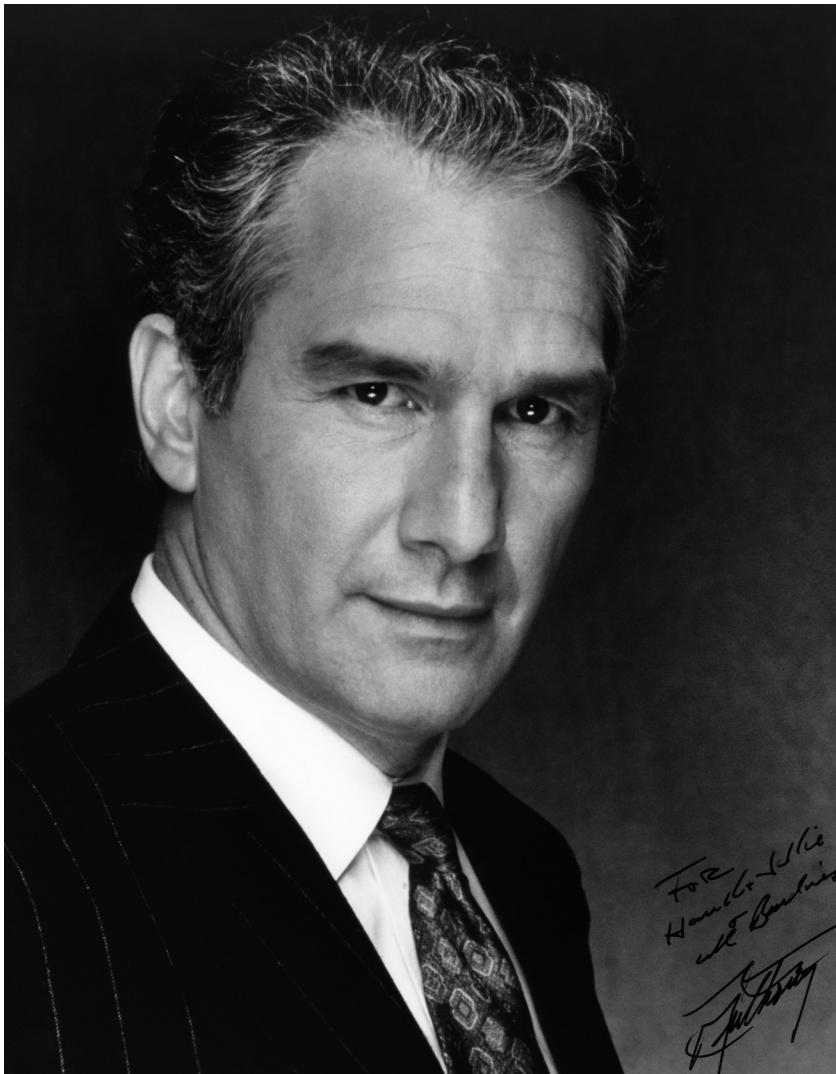
Upon graduation, Anthony headed to New Orleans for the big city life, at least a little bigger than Wiggins. Soon, he was ready to tackle The Big Apple and moved to New York City. There, he studied acting for three years under the world-renowned Stella Adler. To make ends meet he waited tables in local bistros and restaurants. Anthony auditioned for and became a member of the Will Geer Shakespeare Theater. He

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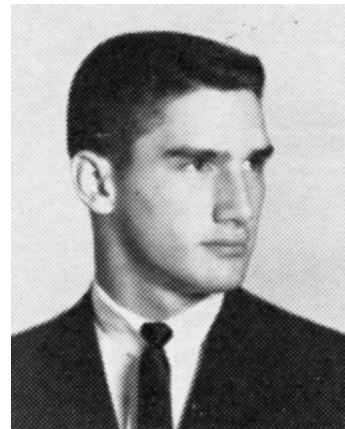
moved to Beverly Hills and lived there for five years while he performed and fine-tuned his love for Shakespeare. And in 1980, the stars aligned and the top ranked daytime CBS soap opera "As the World Turns" knocked on his door. On February 1, Anthony assumed the role of the consummate, handsome and elegant, all time super villain James Stenbeck. An international businessman and European aristocrat, James raged through the fictitious town of Oakdale creating havoc and gathering enemies galore. Over the seasons, James was shot twice, thrown out of a cargo plane, tumbled off of a lighthouse and gone down in a helicopter crash. Finally he was given a lethal injection of a

paralyzing agent causing him to have a fatal heart attack. Until then, he would always return suddenly to Oakdale, and with that husky, sultry voice say to his estranged wife and lover, "Hello, Barbara." James Stenbeck's final appearance on "As the World Turns" was August 27, 2010. During his career, Anthony also played roles in "Silk Stalkings," "The Young and The Restless," "Loving," "Emergency!," "The Incredible Hulk," "Search for Tomorrow," "Mandrake the Magician," "Helter Skelter," "Mancuso, FBI" and "The Rockford Files."

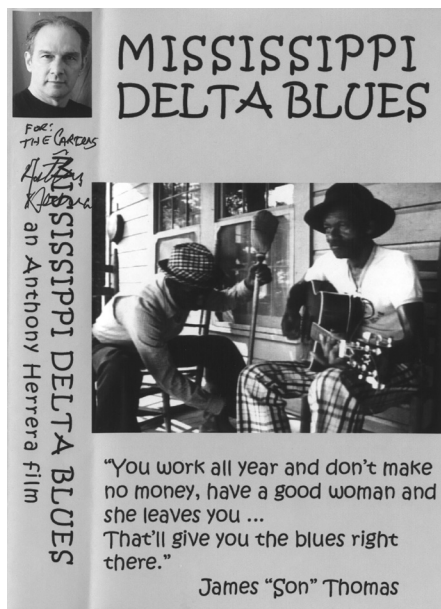
In 1984, Anthony came to Greenville and produced and directed an award-winning documentary on blues great James



Anthony and good friend Emmett Chassaniol at Emmett's farm outside of Winona.



Ole Miss college days, 1963.



"Son" Thomas from Leland. All scenes were shot in Greenville, Leland and Pantherburn. The film won five prestigious awards including the CINE Golden Eagle Award. He continued to write, direct and produce screenplays and productions. In 1986, Anthony wrote the screenplay for and directed Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eudora Welty's "The Wide Net" for the American Playhouse Series on PBS. In 1991, he co-authored "Smoke and Mirrors," a comedy-mystery for the stage, touring Mississippi in 1992. In 1993, Anthony returned to Mississippi with "Love Letters," a play featuring him and Jessica Tandy. Together, they played 18 communities putting on 19 performances in only 21 days.

Anthony had come to Greenville in the early '80s as a house guest of Bern and Franke Keating. He attended No Name Dinner Club parties where he wowed the ladies with his good looks and his Southern flair. When taken to Doe's Eat Place,



“It’s impossible to describe what a stem cell transplant is like. It was Tennessee Williams, Willie Nelson and Louis Armstrong that kept me going.”

some ladies would rush up to hug him and get his autograph while others turned away and scorned him for his villainous roles on “As the World Turns.”

But things were soon to change for Anthony. In January of 1997 he was diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma, a rare and usually fatal cancer. Upon diagnosis, he was told he was going to die. Anthony has never been one to take anything lying down and decided to fight the cancer with all he had. He checked into the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City and was treated with chemotherapy and radiation. Soon he underwent an autologous bone marrow stem cell transplant. In the fall of 1998, Anthony relapsed and in April of 1999 was admitted into the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. MD Anderson was pioneering a new technique in stem cell transplantation and Anthony received a stem cell transplant from his brother John who lived in Austin. This new procedure was on the cutting edge of medical technology in treating lymphoma and was able to give Anthony hope for a cancer free life.

Anthony had been introduced to MD Anderson board member Mrs. Desiree Lyon and she soon discovered that Anthony was not “just one more person with cancer, he was a hurricane ready to do battle.” Through their many visits, Desiree became close friends with Anthony. “I have never seen anyone fight like Anthony, and I have helped hundreds of patients. I learned from our visits that Anthony was passionate about everything he loved, poetry, medicine, movies, drama, his friends, his therapist and the Delta. He would talk endlessly about each of his loves, but with a fresh slant so that he captivated his group of listeners, his audience...yes, audience. Anthony was an actor at heart. He was always on stage.”

Once in remission, Anthony kicked into high gear and took his plight to the public. Over a three-year period, he wrote a book called *The Cancer War*, which relates to his battle and how he was able to survive not only the medical and physical setbacks, but the mental anguish and turmoil of cancer. In an exclusive interview with James Pylant in 2005, Anthony attributed his success in his battle against cancer to “brilliant doctors, finding the right hospital, and a positive attitude...watching, questioning and finding out.”

Soon his plight garnered national attention as he

championed stem cell research. In 2005 Anthony testified before the U.S. Congress about the importance of stem cell research on behalf of Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter.

Anthony began a speaking circuit and gave lectures on “The Human Spirit” at MD Anderson, Sloan-Kettering and St. Jude. He befriended singer/songwriter Willie Nelson and was told by Willie that he should put his poetry on the internet, that the web was a very powerful medium. From that conversation, Poetry Theatre was soon founded with Steve McGraw and


Tandy Cronyn. Poetry Theatre is a web-based archive of great poetry performed by actors who understand and love poetry. It is a unique and interesting way for poetry lovers to see and hear poems recited by performing artists who share a love for poetic verse. Steve McGraw stated recently, “Anthony walked the walk. If he loved it, he did it.”

In a 2009 interview, Anthony described his upbeat attitude during his battle with cancer, “Art is what kept my spirit up through all the horror and pain. It’s impossible to describe what a stem cell transplant is like. It was Tennessee Williams, it was Willie Nelson, and it was Louis Armstrong that kept me going.”

Anthony moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he continued his work with Poetry Theatre and traveled back and forth to the states. He promoted his vision for Poetry Theatre with the Mississippi Arts Council hoping to one day get the program into the

curriculum of every school in the Magnolia State and beyond, using his home state of Mississippi as the template.

However, after ten years in remission, Anthony was diagnosed with another type of cancer and he died on June 21, 2011, in Buenos Aires. He was 67 years old, yet he had lived a life of which few only dream. A television star, playwright, producer and director, Anthony Herrera lived the life he loved. He once stated, “The real actor works a lifetime improving his or her craft.”

James Stenbeck was finally put to rest by the lethal injection and “As the World Turns” final episode was in September of 2010. However, Anthony Herrera’s legacy is burned into the memory of many fans and his beloved Poetry Theatre continues. Anthony worked his entire lifetime improving his art of drama and bringing the love and need for literature and poetry to millions. 



The Cancer War can be downloaded for free at [www.thecancerwar.com](http://www.thecancerwar.com).