by Abi Nicholas ’07

We’ve all heard that familiar adage, “Life is a journey.” And in most cases, it just seems trite and melodramatic – schmaltzy even. But in the case of Erin Wilson Carenzo ’93, it’s anything but. Her life thus far has included a trek across the country, a veritable expedition to chase and capture her dreams.

Her life thus far has included a trek across the country, a veritable expedition to chase and capture her dreams. As a student of Charleston, chances are “Friends” was your anthem.

In fact, if her life were a playlist, she would call it “The Story of a Girl, the Open Road and Endless Possibilities.”

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Carenzo loved cruising around downtown with her friends, catching local bands play at The Music Farm and shopping up and down King Street (on a college budget, of course). She was smart, affable, outgoing and gregarious – it’s no wonder WTMA, the local college radio station where she interned during her senior year, asked her to do on-air newscasts shortly after she graduated.

It was a fabulous job, everything a recent grad could ask for. Except one thing: the pay. To supplement the typical early-20s income, Carenzo spent her evenings…

“Rockin’ the Suburbs” by Ben Folds

She waited tables at the Steak and Ale across the street from the WMFA office in North Charleston to “pay the bills,” she says. (Perhaps it was here that she formed an “obsession” with extra ice in her drinks?) But she was doing what she loved – writing – so she had no complaints.

“What has always been my passion, from a young age,” she says. “We used to go to movies and at the beginning I’d tell my mom, ‘I want to do those,’ and point at the screen. She would say, ‘What? Movies?’ And I’d say, ‘Yes, those. I didn’t know they were called trailers.”

After a stint as the public relations coordinator at The Charleston Museum, Carenzo headed back out to the ‘burbs for a job as the marketing manager for the North Charleston Coliseum. “I did everything from press releases for concerts to traveling for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus to planning press events for Disney on Ice,” she remembers.

Two years later, Carenzo hung up her marketing hat and re-entered the world of journalism, spending about a year as a news producer for Channel 5. But her heart wasn’t in it – not because she didn’t like the station or didn’t enjoy writing and producing news, but because she wanted to be somewhere else entirely. She wanted to be in California, having the…

“Time of [Her] Life” by Green Day

“I’ve been on this journey, and there have been so many ups and downs, but I’ve always been happy. So when it came time to launch her own production company, well, the possibilities are endless. It was a little scary but at the same time so exciting. She waited tables at the Steak and Ale across the street from the WMFA office in North Charleston to “pay the bills,” she says. (Perhaps it was here that she formed an “obsession” with extra ice in her drinks?) But she was doing what she loved – writing – so she had no complaints.

Before they knew it, they were managing a team of graphic artists, and currently their “team,” as Carenzo refers to her staff (“No one’s more important than the next, including myself,” she explains), is made up of about 10 employees.

“Better Together” by Jack Johnson

But in the case of Grapevine Productions has prioritized itself as a one-stop-shop, creating 3D and 2D animations for kids’ programming, writing and producing everything from “mobisodes” (online video content) to commercials, and directing shoots for some of the biggest companies in the biz. Some of their clients include Warner Bros., ABC Cable Networks Group, Buena Vista Home Entertainment, NBC and the CW Network.

The company also produces interactive media and story extensions for the Web. In fact, the company produced the video content for the House website on NBC.com, which took home the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Interactive Media. “Tony and I set out to create fun content in a place that we would want to work, and we did that,” Carenzo says proudly.

From that little girl sitting at movie trailers, she’s come…

“Many the Miles” by Sara Bareilles

“Better Together” by Jack Johnson

Tony Carenzo was tall, dark and totally not her type. Well, not really, but he did run her first staff assignment at Disney.

“We did not see eye to eye,” she laughs. “We used to go to movies and at the beginning I’d tell my mom, ‘I want to do those,’ and point at the screen. She would say, ‘What? Movies?’ And I’d say, ‘Yes, those. I didn’t know they were called trailers.”

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“Aside from my marriage and two children, my proudest achievement was just taking the risk, packing up and moving out here,” says Carenzo. “And looking back, I feel like what I’ve done has really just kind of evolved around what I’m doing now. Each job gave me a piece of the puzzle that I needed, though I maybe didn’t realize it at the time.”

And, at this point in her journey, well, the possibilities are endless.