All too often in the building trades, it’s a battle between the field and the office. So from an outside perspective, Jim and Randy are an unlikely pair. But their partnership transcends differences and brings them together in the best possible way.

Jim Carroll grew up surfing Southern California. A trip to surf Santa Cruz in the early 80’s prompted him to move to the Monterey Peninsula. He was a carpenter with a fire science degree, looking for a better place to live and the opportunity to get on the fire department. But life had a different plan.

After working for a few contractors, Jim discovered his talent and passion for construction. He started his own framing and foundation company, which evolved into general contracting. Jim became renowned for quality and craftsmanship, and that drove his success. We admire those types of values. Randy did too.

Randy Strong grew up building tree houses in Santa Clara. His parents were Fine Arts Majors. Randy got his first taste of construction when he was fourteen - helping build a family art studio. In college, he took a summer job at the site of Apple headquarters in Cupertino. Steve Jobs was often seen walking the grounds. He employed cutting edge building practices and was very involved. Even though Randy was just learning the trades, he knew he’d found his calling.

Randy excelled, first as a finish carpenter before advancing into project management. He built commercial projects for a Fortune 500 company, then transitioned to a firm in Santa Cruz. That’s where he fell in love with custom, high-end home building. Life was good. But Randy, like us, is a go-getter. And he was about to meet Jim and embrace the opportunity to get even better.

They started their partnership with nothing on the books. Zero. After the first six months of nothing, they knew it was going to be great. And it is.
Jim and Randy met on a short-term project that was a world away from their day-to-day lives as high-end home builders. Randy had been running nonprofit mission trips to Mexico, and Jim happened to volunteer for one. They immediately found commonality providing small houses for poor families. And they became fast friends.

Carroll & Strong Builders, Inc. was established in 2006. By the time they wrote the business plan, they knew each other’s strengths and traits. And they let us in on one of the least glamorous secrets to a successful partnership - commitment. In each of their minds, there was no way out.

In order to talk to Jim, we had to meet on a project site. He pretty much lives in the field - and wouldn’t change it for anything. When we asked him why, he couldn’t decide. “I like the design part. Solving problems - getting together and figuring out a (better) way to do it. A lot of it, nobody’s ever done before.” He later said, “My favorite part is coming out of the ground. It’s fun to see if it all (project schedules) makes sense. And it usually does.”

Randy’s forte is systems and organization. Since he’s the inside guy, we met at his office. When we asked what was unique about their partnership, his answer was profound. “Relationships and communication. During the course of a project, it turns into this one big family that we have to be with for 18-24 months. And it’s great!”

Mutual respect and appreciation drive the Carroll & Strong crew to work harder to satisfy the dreams of their adopted project families. Randy emphasized, “It’s the people that are important.” Whether it’s basic shelters in Mexico or sprawling estates on 17-Mile Drive (Pebble Beach), the same ideals that brought them together are what make them successful today - and we can’t agree more.

“IT’S ONE OF THOSE WHERE YOU (HAVE TO) MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS RIGHT. SO LET’S SOLVE ALL THE THINGS THAT COULD HAPPEN BEFORE IT EVER GETS HERE.”

- JIM CARROLL