As a boy, Kenny Carr ’80 was more captivated by the idea of being an architect than being a basketball player.

“I was interested in how things came together, architecturally and engineering-wise,” Carr says. “It still fascinates me the foresight that an architect has to design blueprints.”

But Carr, who played in the NBA for 10 seasons and for the Portland Trail Blazers as his career wound down, may not have embarked on a career in construction if he hadn’t bought an old house outside of Portland, Ore., that required extensive renovation. Inspired by the work of the general contractor and the apparent profitability of the real estate industry, Carr started his own company, Carr Construction Inc., before he retired from basketball in 1987.

Carr initially worked out of his basement, familiarizing himself with the industry by learning what he could from friends in the business. Carr took his first steps as a general contractor, remodeling strip malls and building Safeway grocery stores in the Portland area.

Now 28 years later, Carr Construction employs about 110 workers and has evolved from general contracting to its current specialty as a steel fabricator and erector.

“As a steel contractor, a lot of the buildings are square and the steel gets covered up and nobody ever really sees your work,” says Carr. “But we’ve done some significant ones. We did one project up in Seattle for [Microsoft co-founder] Paul Allen.”

Carr has enjoyed having the chance to work with his son, Devon, who graduated from Oregon State with a degree in engineering. Six years later, Carr says his son is an integral part of the team.

“He does an extremely good job, and I depend on him now,” Carr says. “One day, I imagine he’ll be taking over my position as I sunset out of here.”

At NC State, Carr was one of the most prolific scorers in school history, averaging more than 20 points per game in 1976 and 1977 to lead the Atlantic Coast Conference in scoring both seasons. He played on the U.S. squad that won a gold medal in the 1976 Summer Olympics.

But Carr was more of a blue-collar forward when he played in the NBA. While the work ethic associated with the unglamorous aspects of professional basketball would seem to translate to his current occupation, Carr sees few similarities between his two careers.

Instead, Carr counts himself fortunate that he’s doing something he loves. “I still wake up every day and I enjoy what I do,” Carr says.

—Jack Daly ’01