

# Strong Ties Bio Honors Forward-Thinking Bay Area Business Leader and Philanthropist

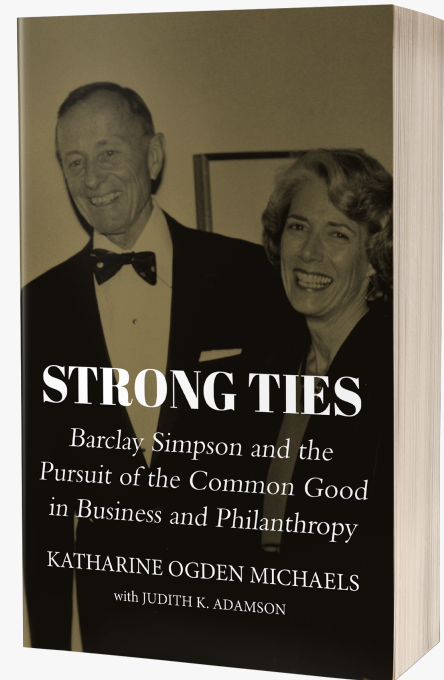
*Barclay Simpson Helped Women Shatter the Glass Ceiling and Reshaped the Art, Education and Literacy Landscape of the Bay Area with His Strategic Giving*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Today's business leaders must balance the need for profits with public and employee demands for income equality, diversity hiring and ecologically sustainable practices. A new biography of a forward-thinking Bay Area business leader and philanthropist points the way to how companies can achieve these goals while empowering their employees.

[Strong Ties: Barclay Simpson and the Pursuit of the Common Good in Business](#) and Philanthropy -- written by [Katharine Ogden Michaels](#) with Judith Adamson (Rare Bird) -- tells the story of how the largely self-taught Simpson built a hugely successful business from nothing and became one of the major philanthropists in the San Francisco Bay Area. The title plays on the metaphor implicit in the core product of the company, a bent metal connector used in residential and commercial construction – called a Strong-Tie.

“To understand Barclay (Barc) Simpson—founder and prime mover of the Simpson Manufacturing Company – you have to first understand his core product,” explains Michaels. “Stripped to its essence, the Simpson Strong-Tie is a piece of bent metal joinery that ties one structural element of a building to another. This part not only helped Barclay build a fabulously valuable company from nothing, but it also became a symbol of his very particular style of ethical leadership. Above all else Barclay's genius had to do with making linkages between people—between managers and employees, between businesses and the communities which harbored them, between profit and the support of non-profit organizations that sustain the basic cultural economies of human life—art, education, literacy, and the active



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assistance of young people from under-resourced communities.”

Simpson ascribed his success to the pursuit of excellence in hiring and employee development. He encouraged his workers to make a career out of their jobs, offering them profit-sharing, health, pension and on-the-job training benefits that were revolutionary concepts in the ‘50s and ‘60s. Such policies helped him recruit and retain a devoted workforce, including a group of outstanding women, hired into the company in the ‘80s, who have risen through its ranks to the very upper echelons of management. As proof of Simpson’s legacy, Karen Colonias just celebrated her 10th anniversary as CEO of Simpson Manufacturing, having guided the company to ever higher levels of profitability.



Katharine Ogden Michaels is a writer, editor, literary executor and a restorer of antique Italian farmhouses.

“

[The Simpson Strong-Tie] not only helped Barclay build a fabulously valuable company from nothing, but it also became a symbol of his very particular style of ethical leadership.”

*Katharine Ogden Michaels*

While chronicling the set of principles that guided Simpson in making money, *Strong Ties* also tells an intriguing story about how he applied many of the same principles in giving it away. He cherished the arts and education for low-income kids and served as a major benefactor to UC Berkeley, Girls Inc. of Alameda County, the California College of the Arts, the Oakland Museum, The Diablo Regional Arts Association, and the California Shakespeare Theater.

Lead author Michaels - who knew Simpson as an employer,

a collaborator on the writing of a catalog for a show of his original Rembrandt prints, co-investor in a property in Italy, and a longtime friend of the family - tells his story with dramatic flair. She previously wrote the screenplay for *The Gambler*, an award-winning biopic telling the ironical, double story of how Fyodor Dostoyevsky fought the clock to dictate a novel in time to pay off his gambling debts.

“*Strong Ties* belongs in memoir, business, and social issues libraries alike. It presents a powerful survey of California leader [Barclay Simpson](#), whose ideals and drive embraced and changed the lives of many in the San Francisco Bay Area. Author Katharine Ogden Michaels . . . captures the complexities and contradictions of Simpson with great subtlety and aplomb.”

Diane Donovan – Editor, California BookWatch

“Katharine Ogden Michaels has written a book that implicitly makes the strong case for an America we ought to create, an America we could urgently use these days. It’s a book about a complicated past that Barclay Simpson did his best to change, not because he could but because he should. Elegantly composed, vividly conceived, stirringly narrated, *Strong Ties* belongs on a lot of bookshelves.”

Joseph Di Prisco - founding chair of New Literary Project and the author of 14 books

“This is a marvelous book describing an iconic Berkeley graduate, Barc Simpson, his extraordinary wife Sharon, and their most interesting, blended family. I had the privilege of interacting intensely with them but most especially with Barc throughout my entire tenure as the Chancellor of UC Berkeley. Barc and Sharon were remarkably humble but at the same time thought deeply about social issues and how they could contribute to them and to the betterment of society. Barc combined egalitarian values with extraordinary generosity, the ability to make decisions quickly and, most especially, high moral character.”

Robert J. Birgeneau - Ninth Chancellor of University of California at Berkeley 2004–2013

*Strong Ties* is available everywhere books are sold on May 17th.

For more information about Katharine Ogden Michaels and *Strong Ties*, visit her website.

To request a review copy of the book or to arrange an interview with the author, please contact Scott Busby at The Busby Group.

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