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### Finley's Jacques Combault receives France's highest honor

May 10, 2010 *Finley Engineering Group*

World-renowned bridge engineer Jacques Combault, technical director of Finley Engineering Group, was recently inducted into the National Order of the Legion of Honour, the highest decoration in France, Finley said.

Presented for the honor by his friend and mentor, Jacques Mathivat, Combault recalled some of the great projects and personalities he encountered in his career. "At the risk of sounding pretentious, I am very proud of the things I have been able to do over the course of my career," he said. "It would be impossible, however, to rate my greatest satisfactions in a top 10 list, so I will just list the most recent ones."

These recent projects include the Rion Antirion Bridge in Greece, the Sutong Bridge in China, and the work he did with Craig Finley on the Miami Intermodal Center, a "prize-winning solution to a challenging motorway exchange problem in the heart of Miami."

Finley, founder and managing principal of Finley Engineering Group, said it was an honor to attend the ceremony for his friend and colleague. "Entertainers and athletes are always receiving awards, so it is refreshing to see Jacques be recognized for his monumental contributions to improving the state of global transportation infrastructure," he said. "His intense creativity and precise technical expertise are unique among practitioners of our trade. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this distinguished honor from his countrymen."

Looking back on his 40-plus-year career, Combault said, "With regards to my studies, you may be surprised to learn that I wanted to be a doctor — more precisely a surgeon. I was passionate about math, physics, chemistry and biology and didn't decide until my final year of high school to study engineering. It is a choice I don't regret. Isn't there great joy in doing what one believes is profoundly important?"

Napoleon Bonaparte established the National Order of the Legion of Honour in 1802 to recognize outstanding achievement. Past honorees include scientist Jacques Cousteau, sculptor Auguste Rodin and author Jules Verne. Foreign recipients include author J.K. Rowling, filmmaker Stephen Spielberg and activist Elie Wiesel.

Mathivat was a director for French engineering and construction company Campenon Bernard when Combault joined the firm in 1967. "From the beginning, your enthusiasm and your passion for bridge design and construction led me to entrust you with the detailed planning of the Givors Bridge deck over the Rhône, which you carried off with confirmed professionalism," Mathivat said in a statement read by his daughter, Catherine. "A long and fruitful collaboration followed."

Mathivat added that Combault was ahead of his time in his willingness to embrace new technologies, including early adoption of computer programs and calculations. Mathivat quipped, "You just might have given Bill Gates a run for his money in other circumstances!"

In addition to Mathivat, Combault thanked two notable mentors who have since passed on — Jean Muller and Jan Chaudesaigues. Both held significant positions at Campenon Bernard and greatly influenced his career. With Mathivat, Combault called them "the magic trio." He also recognized his family's contribution to his career, including his wife, Danièle, and his three children and seven grandchildren.

"For me the most important quality is common sense," concluded Combault in his acceptance speech. "I have taught principles and I have perfected complicated calculations, but at the end of the day, I have come to realize that nothing can replace good, common sense."

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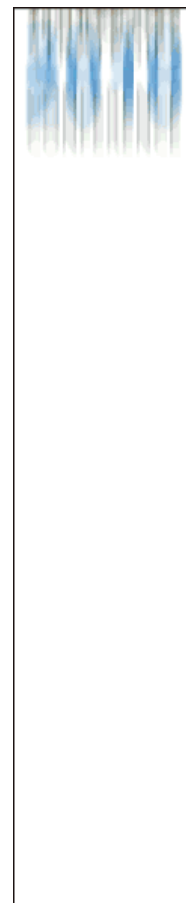
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