

Welcoming remarks for Jacques Perrin

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National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution
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On behalf of Ambassador David Abshire, President of the Richard Lounsbery Foundation, and my fellow members of the Lounsbery Board of Directors welcome.

Thanks to David Evans, Cristian Samper, Robert Sullivan and all members of the Smithsonian Institution who are our hosts tonight. Thanks to Ambassador Levitte, Roland Celette, and their colleagues in the French embassy and to Leonard Silverstein, president of the French-American Cultural Foundation. Thanks above all to Jacques Perrin and his uniquely talented colleagues in Galatee Films for joining us in Washington DC.

One of the purposes of the Richard Lounsbery Foundation is to foster French-American relations, particularly through cooperative activities in the sciences.

After serving in France as an Army lieutenant in World War I, Richard Lounsbery stayed in that country to study art. Thus began his love affair with France, which was to last all his life. In 1928 he married Vera Victoroff, a Russian refugee living in Paris. During nearly 40 years together, they shared many interests and divided their time between Paris and New York, where Richard became a successful banker. When he established the Foundation in the 1960s, not surprisingly he chose French-American relations as a focus.

Few themes today could surpass marine sciences as an area for cooperation. The United States and France have far the largest areas of exclusive economic zone and territorial waters, each with a little above 11 million square kilometers. We should always remember the vast extent of the “Outremer” of France, in Polynesia for example. France has far more ocean than Russia, Canada, or Australia. The US and France together govern 16% of all the water under national supervision.

Moreover, France has a grand tradition of ocean science and exploration. About 500 years ago bold French fishermen began to cross the Atlantic regularly to fish off Newfoundland. In the 18th century, naval officer the Comte de La Perouse, for whom a famous Parisian restaurant is named, mapped the West Coast of North America and visited Hawaii and Easter Island.

Between 1798-1803 the Comte de Lacepede published the first great natural history of fishes in 5 volumes. Between 1830-1839, Achille Valenciennes produce a 22-volume *Histoire naturelle des poissons*, describing 4,514 species of fishes, about one-fifth of the freshwater and marine fishes known today.

In 1861 the French consul from Tenerife presented a paper in Paris at the Academy of Sciences about the discovery of a giant squid. Novelist Jules Verne heard or read the paper and would draw on it in *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, one of the classic imaginative uses of marine observations in the arts.

In 1948 francophone Swiss marine technology pioneer Auguste Piccard sent an unattached submersible vessel into the depths off Dakar, Senegal and by 1956 Auguste and his son Jacques Piccard succeeded in lowering their bathyscaphe to 10,000 feet.

Tonight we are honored with the presence of members of the Cousteau family, synonymous with ocean exploration for many decades.

In 2005 viewers all over the world had the pleasure of seeing the work of French scientists such as Yvon LeMaho and Yves Frenot captured in the prize-winning film *March of the Penguins*. As we speak, LeMaho, Frenot, and other French scientists are leading crucial aspects of the Census of Marine Life research program, far the most ambitious effort ever to describe the diversity, distribution, and abundance of life in the sea.

This week we celebrate another extraordinary French artist who opens our eyes to scientific truth, Jacques Perrin. Jacques Perrin shows the scientific truth of the gestures of monkeys, of the movement of insects, of the shape of Himalayan mountains, of the design of a bird's wing. And now the truth of the design of a fish's fin, as tonight we celebrate the early accomplishments and the aspirations of Galatee's Oceans Project, and its collaboration with French and American scientists and marine scientists everywhere, to make what may prove the greatest nature film of all time.

John Keats wrote that "Beauty is Truth, truth is beauty, -that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know." I believe this is the essential message of the work of Jacques Perrin, the bridge of science and art.

Let me close by mentioning that Richard Lounsbery was a well-regarded painter. I think nothing would make him happier this evening than to welcome Jacques Perrin and Galatee to Washington DC, to bridge the Atlantic and to bridge science and art.

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