

STYLES OF RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS AT COWLES

Dames en Heren, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We, Helen and I, are grateful for the opportunity to be part of the formal opening of the Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute – part of your consolidation and reorganisation of the Utrecht School of Economics.

Tjalling (Charles) Koopmans – as you know – started his university studies here in Utrecht in 1927. He studied mathematics, emphasising analysis and geometry, and earned a B.A. in 1930. This happened just after he completed his secondary school education in a gymnasium in Hilversum, commuting perhaps 12 km from home. His father sent him here to this university, because Utrecht is also not very far from the small village of 's-Graveland where Tjalling was born and raised. His early education had been in one of the town's schools, the 'School of the Bible' (Protestant) where his father was the headmaster.

The last time I was in 's-Graveland in 1987, the little community looked just about as Tjalling described it in 1976 for his Nobel autobiography. My brother, Henry, tells me that it has expanded since, though many of the original elements remain.

In 1930, Tjalling changed the emphasis of his studies from mathematics to theoretical physics, continuing to study here in Utrecht with Professor Hans Kramers. He completed a master's degree here in 1933 in theoretical physics, finishing two papers in the process. We were told in 1975 that one of them was then still cited frequently in textbooks on theoretical physics.

But 1933 was a time of considerable economic upheaval, and my father felt that his mathematical and statistical approaches to physics might have more social relevance and be more effective, if he transferred them to the study of economics. For this reason, Tjalling arranged to be introduced to Jan Tinbergen, who lectured once a week at the Municipal University of Amsterdam. His association with Professor Tinbergen, plus studies abroad with Professor Ragnar Frisch (in Oslo) and a briefer visit with Professor Ronald A. Fisher (in England) prepared him for completion of his Ph D, sponsored jointly by Professors Kramers and Tinbergen (1936, University of Leiden, where

1 Both daughters of Tjalling C. Koopmans. The address was given by Mrs. Frankel.

Professor Kramers was then newly relocated). The topic was the ‘Linear Regression Analysis of Economic Time Series’ and it was published as a book a year later.



*Natal family – Sjoerd and Wijske Koopmans
and three sons, 1914 or 1915.
Tjalling was the youngest.*

These years, many of them at this university, were the formative years for Tjalling's development as a scholar. My family would like to acknowledge and celebrate the role that the Utrecht University has had in forming the man that you are honouring today by naming, for him, your research institute.

The next fifteen years brought Tjalling into several situations where problems of shipping and successful distribution of goods led him to collaborative studies at the British Shipping Mission in Washington D.C. and more fully at the Cowles Commission in the development of a general ‘activity analysis’ model for production. The simplex method developed by Professor George Dantzig provided the computational mode for handling this form of econometric planning and model building. Linear programming, for which Tjalling Koopmans and Leonid Kantorovitch received the Nobel Prize in 1975, is a special case within the general area of activity analysis (Scarf, 1995). There were two additional substantial areas of economics that were to interest