**Richard Cooper tribute, Harvard Economics Department, May 15, 2021.**

**Jeff Frankel**

1. I originally encountered Richard Cooper in his writings, when I was a student in the 1970s. I will add a word on each of two seminal academic contributions that have already been mentioned by other speakers, before turning to more personal observations  
   1. **Devaluation in Developing Countries**
      1. His [1971 paper](https://ies.princeton.edu/pdf/E86.pdf) was one of the first that dealt with the macroeconomics of developing countries, which has become a field of its own.
      2. It has received 814 citations, many of them for the calculation that “in the aftermath of devaluations, the probability that the government would fall within a year [doubled].”
      3. In 2004, I figured that by updating the computation on a larger data set, I could get lots of citations too. His finding held up well and was highly significant statistically. But my paper got fewer than half as many citations [379 < 814, as of May 2021].
   2. **International interdependence and cooperation.** 
      1. **Putting his theories info practice**

### Dick accomplished the rare feat of taking his scholarly contributions regarding international cooperation and helping put them into practice on the world stage, as Under Secretary of State in the Carter Administration (1977-1981). The most salient example was the 1978 Bonn Summit of G7 leaders. There, Germany and Japan agreed with the US that the three would undertake simultaneous fiscal expansion, pulling the rest of the world economy out of economic stagnation.

* + 1. **“Locomotive theory”**

### Indeed, Dick gave the world the phrase “locomotive theory”, as we heard from Fred Bergsten. The story goes that on a visit to Japan he described the US, Japan, and Germany as three big “engines” pulling the global economic train. Local newspapers translated the word “engine” into Japanese; when this coverage was translated back into English it produced the word “locomotive.”

1. Two more anecdotes of which I have only now had my memory jogged.

Fred and Jin have referred to Dick’s ability to sleep on lengthy international airplane flights. I recall long ago, when we were young, Paul Krugman citing Dick and Rudi Dornbusch as evidence that this ability must be a requirement for success in international economics.

We heard from Robert Lawrence about the Brookings paper on the commodity price shock of 1973-74. As I remember the story, When the oil shock first hit, the focus was on the inflation problem and the need to fight it. (Does anyone remember the Ford Administration’s “Whip Inflation Now” campaign?) I was told that Dick was the only one at a key White House conference of eminent economists who pointed out that another effect would be a fall in economic activity. That an adverse supply shock causes both recession and inflation at the same time seems obvious, but evidently it was new then.

1. I first met Dick around 40 years ago, and got to know him in the late 1990s, when we lived across the street from each other in Georgetown, while he was the director of the NIC. (We used to take long walks together on weekends.) I got to know him much better over the last 19 years – 19 years ago being when both of our sons were born. Our two families vacationed together, and the two sons are good friends to this day.
2. I conclude with some observations from my [blog post](http://www.jeffrey-frankel.com/2020/12/24/in-memory-of-richard-cooper/) the morning after he passed away.
   1. Richard Cooper was always young for his age. [This may sound surprising to some, because he was usually so reserved. We have heard that his brother Bob said that Dick was an adult from birth.]   
       He certainly *looked* young for his age. When he was a senior staff economist at the President’s Council of Economic Advisers in the early 60s [1961-63], he used to bring his bicycle into his office at the Old Executive Office Building. As I remember the story, when President Kennedy saw him, he asked someone [maybe Jim Tobin; but Bill Brainard would know better than I] if that was a high school student, working at the CEA.
   2. As recently as a year ago, Dick was still riding his bicycle around Cambridge. I would join him and Jin & Jennie (and sometimes Will) on weekend bike rides along the Charles River. The slideshow that preceded today’s speakers, included a photo showing him with a bicycle in his 20s and two recent ones, in his 80s.
   3. Traits I will remember: He would insist that people clarify precisely what they meant, whether it was at the conference table or the dinner table. He had great intellectual curiosity and energy. I learned something from him every time we talked. He looked on the bright side of things.” These are some of the things I miss.