



# Film Screenings: HILLEMAN Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## Why was Jonas Salk so well-known and Maurice Hilleman virtually unknown?

The differences in notoriety between these two men occurred for a few reasons:

- **Where they worked** – Salk worked in academia and Hilleman worked in industry. People who work in industry tend not to be in the public eye as much as those in academia.
- **Their personalities** – Although Dr. Hilleman had a forceful personality, he was humble. None of his discoveries are named after him. Although Salk did not name his vaccine, he was in the media, so his name was always associated with it.
- **Timing and marketing** – People were scared of polio and desperate for a vaccine. Many children participated in the well-publicized trials as “Polio Pioneers,” and the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (present day March of Dimes) did vigorous fundraising which included celebrity endorsements. As a result, Salk became a new kind of celebrity – a celebrity scientist! When the vaccine worked, Salk became an instant hero.

## Why didn't Dr. Hilleman win a Nobel Prize?

The Nobel Prize is awarded for basic research, not practical applications. Some people felt Dr. Hilleman should have won for his work on interferon, but the award is not given after death and the Nobel committee did not want to give it to an industry scientist. Hilleman was not alone in being passed over for the Nobel Prize in his field; neither Jonas Salk nor Albert Sabin were ever awarded a Nobel.

## Why was Dr. Hilleman able to do so much?

Dr. Hilleman had extraordinary intelligence and remarkable drive. At Merck, he had ample resources and autonomy to develop vaccines. These factors, combined with the faster regulatory process of the era, provided the perfect setting for him to develop a large number of vaccines.

## Why didn't Hilleman take another position when Merck forced him to retire at age 65?

Dr. Hilleman was settled at Merck. To set up a lab in another place would have been an enormous undertaking, and he likely would not have had the resources he had at Merck.

## Where can I get a copy of the film?

Order DVDs or Blu-rays, access a streaming link, or view film excerpts on the Hilleman film website. If you are interested in hosting a screening, please visit the screening resource page to contact us.

## FIND MORE INFORMATION

Check out our offerings and find screening-related resources:  
[hillemanfilm.com/  
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