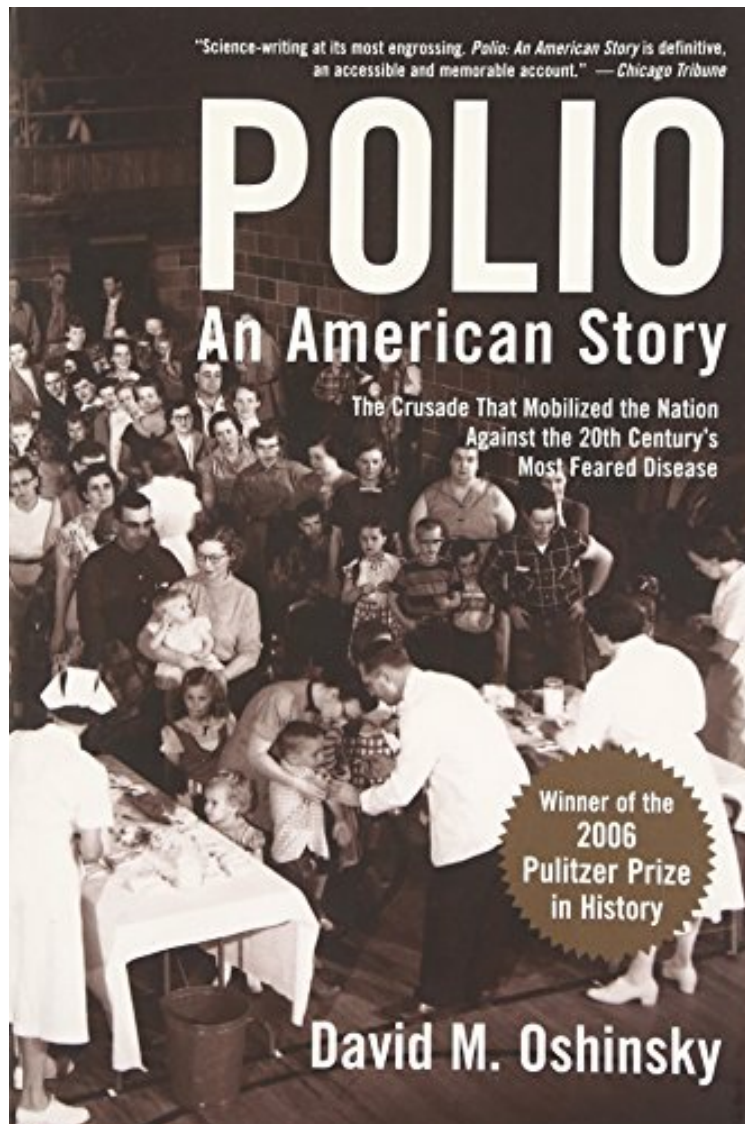


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## Polio: An American Story

*David M. Oshinsky*

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**David M. Oshinsky : Polio: An American Story** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Polio: An American Story:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Well done book on a subject that is becoming a bit more obscure! By keith a. podhradsky This was a well-researched book in my opinion. I don't want to sound callous to people who may have had relatives who suffered from polio, but in a way Oshinsky points out that the reaction to it was out of proportion to the actual percentage of people afflicted with it. Still, the back and forth competition between scientists was interesting. The machinations made for good reading. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Polio: An

American Story By Vivie Sis I greatly appreciated this book. I was born in 1945, remember being injected and the oral vaccine in a sugar cube. I never knew the wide spread problem it became and definitely did not know the fight going on for vaccine. I never new or met anyone with polio but my mother swore she must have been exposed because my younger brother born in 1948 was born with smaller leg and arm, slightly noticeable but a mother knows when something is not right with her child. He had a noticeable step sound when that foot came down. When he went work he had to have a physical and the doc told him his organs on right side were smaller than usual.. The book tells me how blessed we were not to encounter this insidious disease like so many people. Its a must read for those of you who never did either. The disastrous results of this disease and the torment and pain they went through and their spirit to fight is humbling. The spirit of our country to come together and support this disease was amazing and then to help over seas so like people. ITS ABSOLUTELY A MUST READ. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent history of polio vaccine By Bonita Morgan I read this is one day. It s an excellent review of the story, of the eradication of polio in the world. This book includes the necessary science to tell the story but, it is not unmanageable and is easily understood.

Here David Oshinsky tells the gripping story of the polio terror and of the intense effort to find a cure, from the March of Dimes to the discovery of the Salk and Sabin vaccines--and beyond. Drawing on newly available papers of Jonas Salk, Albert Sabin and other key players, Oshinsky paints a suspenseful portrait of the race for the cure, weaving a dramatic tale centered on the furious rivalry between Salk and Sabin. He also tells the story of Isabel Morgan, perhaps the most talented of all polio researchers, who might have beaten Salk to the prize if she had not retired to raise a family. Oshinsky offers an insightful look at the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which was founded in the 1930s by FDR and Basil O'Connor, it revolutionized fundraising and the perception of disease in America. Oshinsky also shows how the polio experience revolutionized the way in which the government licensed and tested new drugs before allowing them on the market, and the way in which the legal system dealt with manufacturers' liability for unsafe products. Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, Oshinsky reveals that polio was never the raging epidemic portrayed by the media, but in truth a relatively uncommon disease. But in baby-booming America--increasingly suburban, family-oriented, and hygiene-obsessed--the specter of polio, like the specter of the atomic bomb, soon became a cloud of terror over daily life. Both a gripping scientific suspense story and a provocative social and cultural history, Polio opens a fresh window onto postwar America.

From Publishers Weekly The key protagonists in historian Oshinsky's (Univ. of Texas, Austin) account of the bruising scientific race to create a vaccine are Jonas Salk, a proponent of a "killed-virus" vaccine, and Albert Sabin, who championed the "live-virus" vaccine. As revered as these men are in popular culture, Oshinsky records their contemporaries' less complimentary opinions (even Sabin's friends, for instance, describe him as "arrogant, egotistical and occasionally cruel"). Oshinsky (A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy, etc.) looks at social context, too, such as the impact of the March of Dimes campaign on public consciousness and fear of polio. Tying in the role polio victim FDR played in making the effort a national priority, the precursory scientific developments that aided Salk and Sabin's work, and the ethical dilemmas surrounding human testing, Oshinsky sometimes bogs down in details. But all in all, this is an edifying description of one of the most significant public health successes in U.S. history. 46 bw photos not seen by PW. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Adult/High School This well-grounded account documents the quest for a polio vaccine. It reveals professional rivalries and clinical breakthroughs, describes a new era in approaches to public philanthropy, and re-creates the tenor of American culture during the 1940s and '50s, when every city, suburb, and rural community faced potential tragedy from annual outbreaks of the disease. The decades-long contentious relationship between doctors Albert Sabin and Jonas Salk provides the centerpiece of this story. Virologists were split into two main camps: those pursuing the development of an attenuated live-virus vaccine versus those focusing on a killed-virus vaccine, with adherents of the latter believing it would prove not only safer and more effective, but also quicker and cheaper to mass produce. Historical context is provided by detailing how Franklin D. Roosevelt raised public awareness, how his influence led to the emergence of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and the March of Dimes, and the subsequent creation of the poster child concept as a way of creating grassroots fundraising. The writing dramatically captures both tensions and ethical dimensions inherent in moving from laboratory work with monkeys to human experimentation and, eventually, to implementation of a massive inoculation program reaching 1.3 million schoolchildren in the 1954 Salk vaccine trials. While this part of the story and the public adulation of Salk have been told elsewhere, Oshinsky amplifies the tale with data explaining why the Sabin oral vaccine became the one preeminently adopted internationally, and why the debate has continued. Sixteen pages of arresting black-and-white photographs are included. Lynn Nutwell, Fairfax City Regional Library, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist \*Starred\* The success of the enormous 1954 field test of the killed-virus polio vaccine developed in the Pittsburgh laboratory of Jonas Salk made him iconically famous. At center stage in journalist Jeffrey Kluger's gripping Splendid Solution [BKL F 1 05], Salk is only chronologically

central in historian Oshinsky's effort, which expands, as Kluger doesn't, on the half-century after Salk's achievement, in particular. Oshinsky shows first that polio was, even at its most prevalent, a relatively low-incidence disease and that the happenstance that it struck Franklin Roosevelt (or did it? Some question the diagnosis) was crucial to making it as dreaded as it was. Roosevelt was also crucial to setting the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis going, with his aggressive law partner, Basil O'Connor, in charge. While Kluger emphasizes the foundation's good works, Oshinsky points up its inspired fund-raising and PR. During the final push to produce a vaccine, Oshinsky illuminates Salk's competitors more than Kluger, and after Salk's triumph, he turns to Albert Sabin, whose live-virus vaccine became officially preferred before mass immunization with Salk's was finished. He confirms what Kluger skirted, that Sabin was a real SOB as well as a good scientist, but, unlike Kluger, he airs trenchant criticism of Salk, too. Further, he brings the story down to the recent reemergence of Salk's vaccine and the present, when the WHO hopes for polio's ultimate eradication in 2008. Narrative history doesn't get much better. Ray Olson

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