



John Franklin Enders

February 10, 1897 - September 8, 1985

Died: Waterford, Connecticut

Interment: Fairview Cemetery, West Hartford, Connecticut

John Franklin Enders died in Waterford, Connecticut, on September 8, 1985. He was eighty-eight. Born in West Hartford on February 10, 1897, the son of a banker, he left Yale for the Army Air Service in 1918, came home, tried real estate, and then did the less expected thing: a Harvard doctorate in bacteriology and a laboratory life at Boston Children's Hospital.

With Thomas Huckle Weller and Frederick Chapman Robbins he showed that poliovirus would grow in cultures of non-nervous tissue. That sentence is small. It meant the virus could be studied, weakened, and turned into the vaccines Albert Sabin and Jonas Salk took to the country. The 1954 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine named the three of them. Newspapers later called Enders the father of modern vaccines; he preferred the names of the fellows at the bench and the measles work that followed in his own rooms. A measles vaccine licensed in the 1960s grew from that culture method as much as from any single slogan.

He was not a celebrity doctor. He kept West Hartford as the family plot and Waterford as a later shore house. He had come to science after other careers failed to hold him, and he never romanticized the detour. Students remembered a courteous, exacting man who would throw out a result that looked too tidy. Boston was the laboratory. West Hartford was the beginning and the burial.

He is buried in Fairview Cemetery in West Hartford. Waterford was the place he died, a coastal town, not a capital of medicine.

Services

Died in Waterford, Connecticut, on September 8, 1985. Interment at Fairview Cemetery, West Hartford, Connecticut. Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1954.

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