

Howard Hughes



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Legend of the Aviator Howard Hughes is a man of many mysteries, very few actual facts are known about him. Historians constantly argue to decipher which of their theories are correct and which are just over glorified rumors. The fact is Hughes liked to keep to himself. This man left behind not only the "Legend of the Aviator" but also one of the biggest gaps in the world of film and aviation. "Hughes was the ambassador who ushered in a new era of living and a new way of life" (Hack 5). He introduced new ideas and accomplished things that people had deemed impossible.

He believed that with his money nothing was impossible, he made that very apparent through his inventions. He designed planes and made some of the most revolutionary movies that captivated the minds of millions. Howard lived his life behind closed doors, hiding all of his true ambitions and how he achieved them. He also hid the world from not only his crazed ideas but also his mental illness, perhaps because he himself did not know that he was mentally ill. Howard Hughes related every aspect of his life to modernism. Not only did he relate to modernism but he himself was a modernist.

His ingenious ideas were thought to be radical for his time but at the same time they were somewhat inspirational. He was an idealistic man who looked beyond the possible and did not take no for an answer. Because of this, he broke world records and raised the bar for the upcoming 20th century. In order to truly understand this man, his actions, and how the "Legend of the Aviator" started one has to look into early life. If there ever was a more crucial part of anyone's life it was Howard Hughes' upbringing. Hughes' birth place and date are not precisely known and are still a major controversy.

What you need to know is that he was born somewhere in Texas in the year 1905. He was born to a very fortunate family. At the time Hughes father Robert was the sole owner of a crucial piece of equipment that was used to drill oil. His father made it rich selling land that contained massive oil deposits and by designing and selling the only drill bit that was strong enough to penetrate hard layers of granite. This drill bit was also the only one that could actually drill deep enough to tap into large oil reserves. In later years Hughes took over the family company after the death of his father in 1924.

He inherited 75 percent of Hughes Tool Co. and later bought out the other 25 percent from the rest of his family (Hack 43). He was inspired to be like his father, a businessman. At heart, Hughes was not a businessman but his positive "go get 'em" attitude helped him seem like one. Hughes' company was once accused of being a monopoly, his response was simply "We don't have a monopoly. Anyone who wants to dig a well without a Hughes bit can always use a pick and shovel" (Howard 1). Howard Hughes was one of the most iconic figures of the earlier half of the 20th century.

He revolutionized the airline industry, presenting ideas that made flights smoother and took less time from takeoff to landing. He single handedly defeated the social norms of his time and was known for setting a certain standard of class. Modernism by broad definition is, "a style or movement in the arts that aims to break that his individual attitude and matches that of modernism. In 1927 the film industry was booming, and Hollywood was at its highest peak in setting new standards. Out of now where a 23 year old

millionaire came from Texas and dropped millions of dollars into one single film.

People were skeptical and thought of this producer as a crazed Texan with money that just wanted to find a way to spend it, but as proven by Howard Hughes they were wrong. Three years later Hughes' movie was released. He had successfully raised the bar for film industry. The movie *Hell's Angels* had broken the record for the highest budget spent, most time ever spent on a film and the highest yield (*Hell's Angels* 1). The critics withdrew their previous remarks and Howard Hughes' name in the film industry was established. Now the man not only owned a great share of the oil market but now had his foot in the film industry.

He produced films, directed movies, and threw around his money around as if it would never leave his side. Some would call it a gamble, and it was but he never did lose that money. Many people that tried to follow in his footsteps ended up broke, and with nothing left in their pockets. For Hughes it was never the case, he was an invincible man. He could do anything he wanted and have any thing he desired. His bank account kept on growing despite his vast expenditures on his little projects. After working on *Hell's Angels* he got more involved in aviation. Howard Hughes, the man who is known as the Aviator. After production on *Hell's Angels* was wrapped up, Hughes became more involved in aviation and started designing his own planes" (Hack 103). He created some of the fastest planes and thought up ideas that seemed impossible or even pointless. For example, the Hughes H-1 Racer. He designed this plane to be fast, his goal was to take off everything on the plane that it did not need and by doing so he made it light

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and aerodynamic, thus giving the plane greater speed. He sunk the screws into the aluminum exterior reducing wind resistance and made many other small advancements that gave his plane a design that was superior to others.

Because of this fascination with planes he always had work. Aviation design opened the door for government contracts designing and creating prototypes of spy planes. Once this door was opened, it shaped Hughes future for years to come. His government contracts were the basis of most of the rumors about Hughes. In his later life scams arose about Howard Hughes, himself trying to plot ways to kill Cuban leader Fidel Castro, along with CIA operations that were claimed to be associated with Hughes. These claims were later discovered to be coverups for a CIA reconnaissance mission of a Soviet Union Nuclear Submarine.

To allude the attention of the public to their massive ships trolling international waters, the CIA claimed that it was simply a drilling rig operation owned by Howard Hughes (Central 2). It was later discovered that he had absolutely nothing to do with this government reconnaissance mission and had no knowledge of it. This man didn't always have the best of luck. On two occasions he came close to death. He dodged death and survived two deadly plane crashes. In his first plane crash he was one of the two survivors, out of the four XF-11, " a military plane that was designed with a counter rotating double propeller system" (History 1).

It was the first of its kind and in early experimental stages. Hughes took the XF-11 for its first test flight. Upon his return to the Air Force base after a very

successful first flight, he lost oil pressure in one of the right engines. Rapidly losing altitude he attempted to crash land in a Beverly Hills mansion. Upon impact the plane's fuel tank ruptured and ignited. Hughes barely managed to escape death, sustaining third degree burns on most of his body and this left him with a severe case of " Complex Regional Pain Syndrome" (Hughes's 1).

The Aviator died on April 4, 1976 (Hack 215). At this point in his life he was dependent on opiates and codeine and had a hygiene issues. He would only cut his hair once a year and was supposedly seen with long grown out fingernails. He became so mentally ill that he believed that the germs did not come from him but came from the world which is ironic because his health was in very poor condition. He died of malnutrition and kidney damage. X-rays later revealed that he had five broken off hypodermic needles in his arm.