



Guide to the Howard Hughes Public Relations Photograph Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Olson, Vernon C.
Title:	Howard Hughes Public Relations Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00373
Date [inclusive]:	1930-1950
Physical Description:	2.6 Linear Feet (28 hanging folders)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Howard Hughes Public Relations Photograph Collection depicts the activities of businessman Howard Hughes from 1930 to 1950. The photographs primarily depict aircraft flown by Hughes or designed by the Hughes Aircraft Company, including the XF-11 reconnaissance plane, the HK-1 Hercules (or "Spruce Goose"), and the Hughes H-1 Racer. The photographs also depict celebrations following Hughes's circumnavigation flight in New York City, New York and Chicago, Illinois in 1938. Lastly, the photographs include Hughes testifying in front of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program in 1947.

Preferred Citation

Howard Hughes Public Relations Photograph Collection, 1930-1950. PH-00373. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note for Howard Hughes

American businessman Howard Hughes was born in 1905 in Houston, Texas. Hughes's business career began when he gained control of Hughes Tool Company in 1924, at the age of 19, after his father's death. In 1932, he formed Hughes Aircraft as a division of Hughes Tool Company. His company won defense contracts during the Second World War to develop high-speed pursuit and reconnaissance aircraft and communication systems.

Perhaps the most famous of these experimental prototypes was the HK-1 Hercules, better known as the "Spruce Goose" or "Flying Boat," a gargantuan wooden cargo plane that Hughes himself piloted on its brief and only flight of one mile, 70 feet above Long Beach Harbor in 1947. As a result of the failures of the HK-1 program and other prototypes developed by Hughes, he was called to testify before the U.S. Senate's Truman Committee in 1947 to justify use of government money on wasteful defense contracts. In 1953, Hughes turned over ownership of the Hughes Aircraft Company to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Hughes also had a career in the movie business as a director and producer. He directed *Two Arabian Nights* (1928), *Hell's Angels* (1930), and *The Outlaw* (1943). Hughes bought the Hollywood movie studio RKO in 1948.

Howard Hughes moved to Las Vegas, Nevada November 27, 1966, and took up residence on the top two floors of the Desert Inn. When asked to vacate his room, he purchased the hotel. At this point in his life, Hughes became increasingly reclusive, and he used his suite in the Desert Inn as the hub of his business ventures for four years. Hughes purchased real estate in Las Vegas and started the Summa Corporation in 1972, a holding company that managed Hughes's remaining investments and primarily developed and managed the Hughes real estate holdings on the west side of the Las Vegas Valley. By 1970, Hughes had purchased \$65 million of Las Vegas hotels, casinos, and property, making him the largest single property owner in Nevada at the time. By this point, he controlled approximately 20% of all the hotel rooms on the Las Vegas Strip. His holdings also included approximately 25,000 acres that became the master-planned community of Summerlin, an affluent suburb of Las Vegas.

In November 1970, Hughes secretly left Las Vegas and moved to the Bahamas. Hughes died on April 5, 1976, on a flight from Mexico to Houston, Texas.

Source:

Burbank, Jeff. "Howard Hughes." *Online Nevada Encyclopedia*, July 11, 2011. <http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/howard-hughes>

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Biographical Note for Vernon C. Olson

Vernon C. Olson served as an accountant for Howard Hughes. He began working for Hughes in Culver City, California, but moved to Las Vegas, Nevada in 1973 to help manage Hughes's hotels. He served as Senior Vice President for the Hughes Corporation and later on the Board of Directors for the Summa Corporation. He retired after working for Hughes for 46 years. Olson had three children with his wife JoAnn. He passed away in Henderson, Nevada on May 30, 2012.

Source: "Vernon Olson Obituary." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. May 31, 2012. <http://obits.reviewjournal.com/obituaries/lvrj/obituary.aspx?pid=157890374>

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Scope and Contents Note

The Howard Hughes Public Relations Photograph Collection depicts the activities of businessman Howard Hughes from 1930 to 1950. The photographs primarily depict aircraft flown by Hughes or designed by the Hughes Aircraft Company, including the XF-11 reconnaissance plane, the HK-1 Hercules (or "Spruce Goose"), the Hughes H-1 Racer, the Northrup Gamma Racer, the Lockheed 14, the Sikorsky S-43, and Hughes's modified Douglas B-23 bomber. The photographs also depict celebrations following Hughes's circumnavigation flight in New York City, New York and Chicago, Illinois in 1938. Lastly, the photographs include Hughes testifying in front of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program in 1947. The collection was compiled by Vernon C. Olson, who began working for Howard Hughes as an accountant and was eventually promoted to Senior Vice President of both the Hughes Corporation and the Board of Directors for the Summa Corporation.

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Arrangement

Materials are organized into eight series:

Series I. Northrop Gamma Racer photographs, 1936;

Series II. Hughes HK-1 Hercules photographs, 1945-1947;

Series III. Hughes XF-11 photographs, 1946-1947;

Series IV. Hughes H-1 Racer photographs, 1937;

Series V. Lockheed-14 photographs, 1936-1939;

Series VI. Hearings of the U.S. Senate Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program photographs, 1947;

Series VII. Howard Hughes's around-the-world flight photographs, 1938;

Series VIII. Miscellaneous photographs of aircraft and events, 1930-1950.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research. Some collection material has been digitized and is [available online](#).

Publication Rights

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Reproductions and Use](#) on the UNLV Special Collections website for more information about reproductions and permissions to publish.

Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 2013 by Vernon C. Olson via Paul and Melinda Osterman.

Processing Note

Materials were processed by Special Collections staff. In 2015, as part of a legacy finding aid conversion project, Lindsay Oden wrote the collection description in compliance with current professional standards.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:

Howard Hughes Professional and Aeronautical Photographs, 1916-1997. PH-00321. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Howard Hughes Public Relations Records, 1930-1990. MS-00380. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Hughes Electronics Collection, 1940-2003. MS-00485. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Bob McCaffrey Collection on the Save the Spruce Goose Campaign, 1980. MS-00693. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Sands Hotel Collection, 1952-1979. MS-00417. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Hughes, Howard. Interview, April 08, 1976. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Names and Subjects

- Hughes Flying-boat (Seaplane)
- Aviation
- Politicians
- photographs
- Airplanes
- Hughes, Howard, 1905-1976
- Hughes Aircraft Company
- Hughes Electronics Corporation
- Hughes Tool Company
- United States. Congress. Senate. Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program

Collection Inventory

Northrop Gamma Racer photographs, 1936

Physical Description: 0.2 Linear Feet (2 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict Howard Hughes operating and working on the Northrop Gamma Racer 2G in 1936. In 1935 and 1936, Howard Hughes attempted to break several records in the Northrop Gamma, and he broke his own transcontinental record by flying from Los Angeles, California to New York City, New York in 9 hours, 26 minutes.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

Title/Description	Containers
Howard Hughes posing in the cockpit of his Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0164) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes posing in the cockpit of his Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0165) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes's Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0166) (view online)	folder 01
Men positioning aircraft, 1936 January (0373_0167) (view online)	folder 01
Men positioning aircraft, 1936 January (0373_0168) (view online)	

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Howard Hughes's Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January 14 (0373_0170) (view online)	folder 01
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Howard Hughes and plane, presumably the Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0184) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes getting into the Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0185) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes getting into the Northrop Gamma Racer, 1936 January (0373_0186) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes taking off from Newark, New Jersey for Indianapolis, Indiana, 1936 January (0373_0187) (view online)	folder 01
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Howard Hughes warming up his Northrop Gamma Racer at the Chicago Municipal Airport preparing for a flight to Los Angeles, California, 1936 (0373_0202) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes beside the Northrop Gamma Racer near hangar at Chicago Municipal Airport in Chicago, Illinois, 1936 May 14 (0373_0203) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes surrounded by unidentified men, possibly members of the press, 1936 (0373_0204) (view online)	folder 01
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Hughes HK-1 Hercules photographs, 1945-1947

Scope and Contents Note: Materials contain photographs of the HK-1 Hercules, otherwise known as the "Spruce Goose" or the "Flying Boat," from 1945 to 1947. The photographs primarily depict the construction, transportation, and storage of the plane, but also include the first and only test flight of the HK-1 above Los Angeles Harbor in 1947. Howard Hughes designed the HK-1 as the world's largest plane, capable of transporting large quantities of U.S. military hardware and personnel. In 1947, under the program's new designation H-4 Hercules, Hughes had the plane transported from his factory in Culver City, California to Los Angeles Harbor. On November 2, he piloted the plane during its only test flight. The U.S. Air Force abandoned the controversial project, and Hughes was called to testify before the Truman Committee of the U.S. Senate to justify the use of government funds on a program that never succeeded.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Hughes XF-11 photographs, 1946-1947

Physical Description: 0.2 Linear Feet (4 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials contain photographs of the Hughes XF-11 prototype military reconnaissance aircraft from 1946 to 1947. The photographs depict Howard Hughes piloting the two XF-11 prototypes that were built: during the test flight in July 1946, Hughes crashed the first XF-11 in Beverly Hills, California; in April 1947, Hughes successfully flew the second prototype at high speeds and at high altitudes. However, the United States Air Force abandoned the controversial project, and in August of 1947, Hughes was called to testify before the Truman Committee in the U.S. Senate about the failures of the program.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Hughes H-1 Racer photographs, 1937

Physical Description: 0.1 Linear Feet (2 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict the Hughes H-1 Racer in 1937. The photographs primarily depict Howard Hughes standing with the plane or in the plane's cockpit. The plane was designed by Glenn Odekirk and built by Hughes Aircraft Company in 1935, the first plane produced by the company. Hughes broke several records in the H-1, including the landplane speed record in 1935. In 1937, Hughes broke his own transcontinental speed record by flying from Los Angeles, California to New York City, New York in 7 hours, 28 minutes. Despite its speed, Hughes was unable to sell the H-1 to the U.S. military.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

Title/Description

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Lockheed 14 photographs, 1936-1939

Physical Description: 0.5 Linear Feet (7 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict the Lockheed Model 14 Super Electra piloted by Howard Hughes from 1936 to 1939. Along with a crew consisting of Harry Connor, Tom Thurlow, Richard Stoddart, and Ed

Lund, Hughes flew the Super Electra on a global circumnavigation flight. On July 10, 1938, Hughes and the crew departed Floyd Bennett Field in New York and flew to Paris, France, Moscow, Russia, Omsk, Russia, Yakutsk, Russia, Fairbanks, Alaska, and Minneapolis, Minnesota before landing back in New York on July 14.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Hearings of the U.S. Senate Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program photographs, 1947

Physical Description: 0.3 Linear Feet (5 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict Howard Hughes at the U.S. Senate Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program hearings in 1947. The special committee, also called the Truman Committee, began investigating Howard Hughes's defense contracts after the Second World War. Hughes had been unable to produce feasible prototypes for the HK-1 Hercules (also known as the H-4 Hercules, "Spruce Goose," or "Flying Boat") as well as the XF-11 reconnaissance aircraft, despite spending \$22 million. The materials depict Hughes giving testimony, answering questions, and having verbal exchanges with Senators Owen Brewster, Claude D. Pepper, and Homer Ferguson. The photographs also depict Hughes in conversation with his attorney T. A. Slack and Noah Dietrich, Chief Executive Officer of the Hughes Corporation.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Howard Hughes's around-the-world flight photographs, 1938

Physical Description: 1 Linear Feet (11 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict the celebrations of Howard Hughes's circumnavigation flight in 1938. Along with a crew consisting of Harry Connor, Tom Thurlow, Richard Stoddart, and Ed Lund, Hughes flew the Super Electra on a global circumnavigation flight. On July 10, 1938, Hughes and the crew departed Floyd Bennett Field in New York and flew to Paris, France, Moscow, Russia, Omsk, Russia, Yakutsk, Russia, Fairbanks, Alaska, and Minneapolis, Minnesota before landing back in New York on July 14. The photographs primarily depict the parades thrown for Hughes after completion of the flight. The photographs also depict Hughes and his crew meeting with New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia at New York City Hall, the National Press Association, and crowds of onlookers who attended the plane's landings in various cities.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Miscellaneous photographs of aircraft and events, 1930-1950

Physical Description: 1.5 Linear Feet (16 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict Howard Hughes during various ventures from 1930 to 1950. The photographs depict Trans World Airlines planes, the crash site of Hughes's Sikorsky S-43 in Lake Mead, Nevada, aircraft construction, portraits, unidentified aircraft, events, Hughes during the production of the film *The Outlaw*, and Hughes speaking with members of the press.

Arrangement: Materials are partially organized into three subseries:

Subseries VIII.A. Trans World Airlines photographs, approximately 1942-1947;

Subseries VIII.B. Sikorsky S-43 crash photographs, 1937-1943;

Subseries VIII.C. Aircraft construction photographs, 1937-1943.

Trans World Airlines photographs, approximately approximately 1942-1947

Physical Description: 0.2 Linear Feet (3 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict Trans World Airlines (TWA) aircraft from approximately 1942 to 1947. The photographs primarily depict Howard Hughes with TWA aircraft.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Trans World Atlantic (TWA) transcontinental plane during flight, approximately 1942-1944 (0373_1007) (view online)	folder 19
Trans World Atlantic (TWA) transcontinental plane during flight, approximately 1942-1944 (0373_1008) (view online)	folder 19
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Trans World Atlantic (TWA) transcontinental plane, approximately 1942-1944 (0373_1027) (view online)	folder 19
Trans World Atlantic (TWA) transcontinental plane, approximately 1942-1944 (0373_1028) (view online)	folder 19
Trans World Atlantic (TWA) transcontinental plane, approximately 1942-1944 (0373_1029) (view online)	folder 19
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Trans World Airline plane equipped with radar that Howard Hughes is flying in Culver City, California, 1947 May 03 (0373_1232) (view online)	folder 24

Sikorsky S-43 crash photographs, 1937-1943

Physical Description: 0.1 Linear Feet (3 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict the Sikorsky S-43 aircraft from 1937 to 1943. The photographs primarily depict the salvage of Howard Hughes's S-43 from its crash site in Lake Mead, Nevada.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Sikorsky S-43 aircraft, 1937 October 21 (0274) ([view online](#))

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Sikorsky S-43 aircraft, 1937 (0275) ([view online](#))

folder
03

Sikorsky S-43 aircraft, 1937 (0277) ([view online](#))

folder
03

Aircraft construction photographs, 1937-1943

Physical Description: 0.1 Linear Feet (3 hanging folders)

Scope and Contents Note: Materials depict workers building planes at the Hughes Aircraft Company from 1937 to 1943. The photographs primarily depict construction workers, engineers, and Howard Hughes working in the company's factory in Culver City, California.

Arrangement: Materials remain in original order.

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Airplane part during assembly, undated (0300) (view online)	folder 04
Airplane part during assembly, undated (0301) (view online)	folder 04
Airplane part during assembly, undated (0302) (view online)	folder 04
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Airplane part during assembly, undated (0304) (view online)	folder 04
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Airplane part during assembly, undated (0309) (view online)	folder 04
Airplane part during assembly, undated (0310) (view online)	folder 04
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Howard Hughes being served by an unidentified man, 1936 January (0373_0175) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes on a telephone, 1936 January (0373_0176) (view online)	folder 01
Howard Hughes sitting on a bed, 1936 January (0373_0177) (view online)	folder 01
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Interior of a plane, undated (0214) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane, undated (0215) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing communications equipment, undated (0216) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing communications equipment, undated (0217) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing equipment, undated (0218) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing equipment, undated (0219) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing equipment, undated (0220) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing fuel tanks, undated (0221) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing fuel tanks and valves, undated (0222) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing fuel tanks and valves, undated (0223) (view online)	folder 02
Interior of a plane showing navigation equipment, undated (0224) (view online)	folder 02
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Aircraft, undated (0226) (view online)	folder 02
Aircraft landing gear, undated (0227) (view online)	folder 02
Aircraft nose and cabin, undated (0228) (view online)	folder 02
Aircraft taxiing to runway, undated (0229) (view online)	

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Aircraft taking off, undated (0230) (view online)	folder 02
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Aircraft figurine, undated (0232) (view online)	folder 02
Artist's rendering of aircraft in flight, undated (0233) (view online)	folder 02
Three people standing by a plane, undated (0234) (view online)	folder 02
Four people standing by a plane, undated (0236) (view online)	folder 02
Howard Hughes standing by a plane, undated (0238)	folder 02
Howard Hughes standing by a plane, undated (0239)	folder 02
Covered plane in a hangar, undated (0256) (view online)	folder 02
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Franklin D. Roosevelt presenting the Harmon Trophy to Howard Hughes, 1937 March 02 (0265) (view online)	folder 03
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Aircraft being transported, approximately 1937-1940 (0286) (view online)	folder 03
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