



### Text Version of Audio Story: Howard Hughes

He had it. Back before anyone knew what *it* was — OCD, obsessive-compulsive disorder. A disorder that made him incredibly rich because of his attention to detail. A disorder that made him incredibly miserable because of his attention to germs. We, collectively speaking as Americans, wanted to know more about him, if for no other reason than, in his later life, he didn't want us to know more about him. Howard Hughes suffered with severe mental illness. His was one of the most tormented minds in America. His was one of the greatest minds in America.

He had taken up residence or, perhaps, it would be appropriate to say imposed exile upon himself, in the penthouses of various grand hotels, including, of course, in the town he owned much of, Las Vegas. By modern day standards, in his early life, he would be thought of as a Renaissance man. That is to say he had many interests and acted upon them. Howard Hughes was a filmmaker, studio owner, aviation pioneer and a real estate magnate, among other things. But what he was most of all was a guy crunching the numbers, figuring out how to pursue his interest and make money doing it.

He started out as a young man in Texas who had lost both of his parents at an early age. Historians believe it was his mother who seeded many of his fears, the fear of germs chiefly among them. Howard's father was a well-to-do businessman, who had invested in a revolutionary oil-drilling tool. His mother died first. Howard was a teenager. Two years later, in 1924, his father would pass away, leaving Howard with several million dollars to get started. He quickly kicked the dust of Texas off his shoes and headed for Hollywood. He wanted to make movies.

Hollywood dismissed him as a rich kid with no talent for making movies. Howard proved them wrong. He chewed Hollywood up and spit it back out, leaving most who had dismissed him envious of his position. Howard also had an insatiable appetite for women and went through Hollywood starlets at a ravenous pace. Of course, one can hardly talk about Howard Hughes without talking about aviation, just another one of his many interests. With the exception of the Wright Brothers, Howard Hughes did as much, if not more, to advance the future of aviation than anyone. His company, Hughes Aircraft, experimented with, implemented, and — in great part — introduced modern aviation.

As Howard aged, his mental illness became ever-increasingly difficult to manage. It was complicated by head injuries he had received in a plane crash. Eventually,

Howard would retreat from a world filled with germs and place himself in an odd and protective bubble, if you will. He became a recluse. Shortly after his death in the mid-1970s, a handwritten will showed up, naming a hard-luck gas station owner, among others, as heirs to his billions. Melvin Dumar, the gas station owner, claimed he had met Howard Hughes one night along a lonely road in the desert and gave him a ride back to Las Vegas. "*He looked like a bum,*" Dumar said, who didn't believe the stranger who said his name was Howard Hughes. The court threw the will out and said it was fraud.

At the time of this writing in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many historians now believe — based on new and highly reliable evidence — that Howard Hughes was, indeed the disheveled gentleman that Melvin Dumar picked up on the highway. The courts are revisiting the authenticity of the alleged will in which Melvin Dumar would receive a 1/16 share equaling 156 million dollars.

From somewhere behind the radio, I'm the American Storyteller.