

Howard Hughes' 1938 Round the World Flight

By Ed Martin

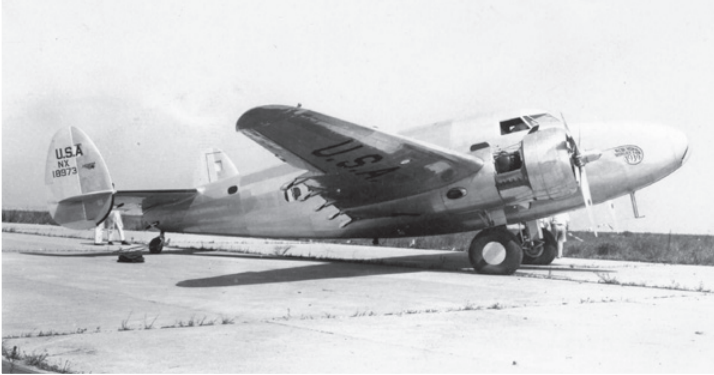


Photo of Hughes Lockheed 14 Super Electra, NX18793, undergoing preparations for the around the world flight. Note the New York World's Fair 1939 logo on the nose. (Photo from the Gerald Balzer collection, AAHS archives)



Another view of Hughes Lockheed 14 Super Electra. This is most likely a Lockheed factory photo taken before delivery to Hughes as it carries the NC18793 registration and does not have the World's Fair logo on the nose. (Photo from the Gerald Balzer collection, AAHS archives)

In 1938 one of America's young millionaires, 33-year old avid aviator Howard Hughes and a crew of four men planned a flight from New York to Paris and other European capitals. They would extend invitations to European aviation interests to participate in the 1939 New York World's Fair. Unofficially, it was believed Mr. Hughes hoped to extend the flight into a race around the world should fly-over approval be obtained from one remaining European country and thereby beat the time of seven days 19 hours 49 and one half minutes set by Wiley Post in July 1933.

The flight would operate under the banner of the New York World's Fair, 1939. Howard Hughes was given the title of "aeronautical advisor to the World's Fair" and his ship, a Lockheed 14 Super Electra (NX18973) all metal monoplane, was christened New York World's Fair, 1939. The ship, elaborately modified by Hughes and his engineers, was similar to those used by U.S. and European airlines. Howard Hughes would pilot the aircraft, Ed Lund, 32, acting as flight engineer, with Richard Stoddard, 37, as the radio engineer having received

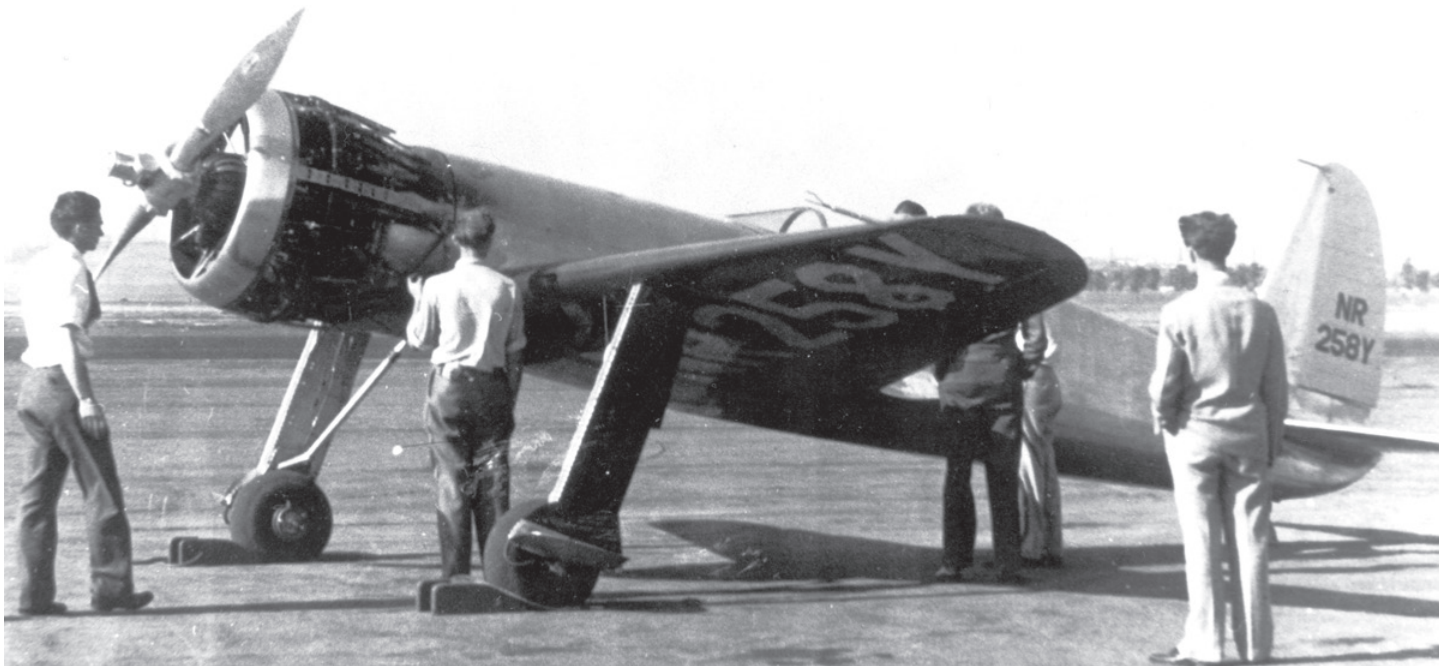
a leave of absence from a major network. Thomas L. Thurlow, 33, a first lieutenant in the Army Air Corps and a navigation instrument specialist, along with Harry P. McLean Connor, 38, a former navigator for Panama-Pacific Lines would be the navigators. Flight operations manager for the flight was Al Lodwick based in New York.

The Lockheed 14 Super Electra, equipped with two Wright Cyclone engines of 1,100 hp each and with the new Hamilton Standard "hydro-matic" constant speed "full feathering" propellers. The plane had a wingspan of 65 feet and a normal permissible gross weight for airline use of 17,500 lbs. The Hughes aircraft due to an overload of gasoline, equipment and other supplies had a gross weight of 25,000lbs. Six additional fuel tanks were added in the cabin giving it a total capacity of 1,732 gallons of gasoline and a range of 4,700 miles, a thousand miles more than needed for the flight to Paris. The ship also carried 120 gallons of lubricating oil and had a rated top speed of 250mph.

The plane was equipped with a Sperry gyroscope that



Hughes and his flight crew in an undated photo most likely taken after the flight. L-R: Thomas L. Thurlow, navigation specialist; Edward Lund, flight engineer; Al Lodwick, flight operations manager in New York; Howard Hughes, organizer and pilot; Harry P. Mclean Connor, navigator; Richard Stoddard, radio engineer. (From the Gerald Balzer collection, AAHS archive)



Hughes was not satisfied with his win at the All-American Air Meet in January 1934. He wanted to go faster. Glenn Odekirk gave the answer: Hughes should build his own plane. Thus the Racer, and subsequently the Hughes Aircraft Company, came into existence. Speed he got. On September 13, 1935 he broke the three kilometer landplane speed record with an average speed 352.38 mph. (Photo from the Western Museum of Flight collection)

could fly the ship on a fixed course without human hands. In addition it had a Sperry directional gyro and artificial horizon, a turn and bank indicator, two sensitive altimeters, three magnetic compasses, a periscopic drift indicator developed by Lieutenant Thurlow, and the other octants and instruments necessary for celestial navigation. A Bendix radio compass loop was mounted on top of the fuselage and a Fairchild-Kreusi radio compass loop on the bottom, one for use with shore stations and the other for ships at sea. The equipment installed was the most elaborate ever used and especially built for the flight, enabling the plane's crew to determine their exact position at any time during the flight by a simple triangulation. One of the transmitters was designed by Hughes and his radio technicians, and was anticipated to give a spectacular demonstration of the set's capabilities. Call sign used Hughes' initials, KHRH.

With the elaborate radio equipment Hughes would broadcast at intervals of 30 minutes the flight's position and progress along with scientific data.

Howard Hughes was born in Houston, Tex., on December 24, 1905, and inherited a fortune from his father, an inventor of an oil well drill and founder of the Hughes Tool Company. Hughes ran the company after his father's death and later moved to California where he became a successful movie producer. Howard Hughes was devoted to his interest in aviation and became a world renowned pilot.

In August 1935, Howard Hughes, attempted to set a new world speed record at Santa Ana, Calif., unfortunately darkness postponed the attempt. In September of the same year while making his seventh speed run in his low wing monoplane he had to belly land in a bean field a quarter of a mile from the Eddie

Martin Airport in Santa Ana. The old record was 314 mph and he was clocked over several runs at 335 to 355mph with a final record of 352.388mph. In 1935 Hughes set a new speed record of nine hrs 16min 10 sec, for a West to East transcontinental flight in his Northrop Gamma. In 1936 he set three world speed records.

The following material regarding Hughes' around the world flight is referenced from the Violet Sweet Haven collection of 1938 newspaper clippings.

July 9, 1938. Associated Press.

Howard Hughes arrives at Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N.Y., to supervise final preparations for the flight to Paris and possibly round the world. Mechanics had discovered all 18 of the cylinders in the two engines pitted during their one-stop flight from Burbank, Calif., to Floyd Bennett Field, New York. The pitting was probably caused by lead in the gasoline and new cylinders were installed. This caused the flight be delayed until Sunday July 10, 1938.

Emergency equipment onboard includes two life-rafts; either can carry all crew members. There is also a parachute aboard for each crew member hanging in the cabin and immediately accessible, attached to each chute is a 30 day rations containing concentrated food, plus fishing tackle, a hunting knife, a package of First Aid supplies and a snake kit.

Provisions onboard include 10 pounds of beef, cheese, ham, lettuce and tomato sandwiches. Eight pounds of boned young turkey packed in air tight jars, 15 quarts of milk, three quarts of coffee, and 15 gallons of water. Mr. Hughes desired the crew to drink the same kind of water all around the world

to avoid dysentery.

The plane would fly at 10,000 to 15,000 feet to Paris and carried an ample supply of oxygen for all crew members. Mr. Hughes anticipated flying at 170 mph and reaching Paris in 22 hrs.

New York Times, July 1, 1938.

Prior to attending the departure ceremonies it was learned Hughes flew by seaplane to Old Saybrook, Conn., for a brief visit to say good-bye to movie star friend, Katherine Hepburn.

In ceremonies before the takeoff, Grover Whalen, President of The World's Fair Corporation described the flight to Paris "as a dramatic and glorious undertaking which will remind the world of the goodwill and understanding that has long existed between two great democratic nations." Just before takeoff Hughes asked airport attendants to lighten the ship by removing 100 gallons of gasoline, reducing the load to 1,632 gallons. As the sun set on Sunday July 10, at 7.20 pm. Howard Hughes pushed the throttles to full power, and the Lockheed aircraft with its 2,200-hp engines roaring, slowly gained speed. The over laden craft refused to leave the Floyd Bennett runway until a speed of 125mph was reached but its tail wheel was badly damaged on takeoff. A speed of 175mph was reached as the aircraft continued to climb and disappeared from sight.

Washington Post, July 11.

Log of Hughes' Flight to Paris.

Sunday, July 10, 1938

7.30 pm: Left Floyd Bennett Airport. 8.26 pm, Over Boston, still climbing, everything fine.

9.20 pm: 280 miles out over Gulf of Maine, off Rockland.

10.30 pm: plane's position given by first broadcast (on National Network's) 470 miles out over Bay of Fundy, near Margaretsville, Nova Scotia. Indicated speed 155mph.

11.20pm: 720 miles out of New York, at North end Cape Breton, weather fine, Speed 180mph.

Monday July 11

1.30 am: "Beginning 1,700 mile over water hop, leaving Newfoundland. Position latitude 49.38: longitude 54: altitude 7,450 feet: speed 192 miles per hour, weather clearing after light rain."

Monday July 11, Associated Press.

1,400 miles from Floyd Bennett Field, Howard Hughes expressed concern over the fuel consumption of the heavy

laden monoplane. Speeding at 192 mph through low hanging clouds Hughes said "I hope we are going to get there. We don't anticipate landing the plane short of the other side, however." Flight advisors at the World's Fair Headquarters took this to mean Hughes was confident of clearing the 1,850-mile stretch from Newfoundland, to the coast of Ireland.

Hughes said "high temperatures had prevented economical operation of the motors, but expected more efficient performance from now on."

New York Herald Tribune, July 12, 1938

Howard Hughes and his four companions arrived at Le Bourget Airport, in Paris at 11.55 am New York time, following a 16hr 38min flight at 180-190 miles per hour and an average ceiling of 6,000 feet. Making such fast time from New York caught the welcoming crowd of 1,000 by surprise. The Hughes Lockheed had landed two minutes before a British Airways plane of the same make arrived from London, and when the second Lockheed was seen taxiing the crowd realized Hughes had arrived. U.S. Ambassador Bullitt, along with Naval and Air Attaches were at the airport to greet the flyers. Congratulations, the Ambassador shouted, "did you make a good trip."

Hughes said "flight from New York was uneventful except for the engines being rough and the compass did not function. We radioed ahead for a new compass, but in mid-ocean the compass began to function correctly, and we are not changing it."

"Some radio difficulties are being smoothed out and we are installing a new antenna because the other snapped in landing. The flight over the ocean was perfect. We hit the small corner of Ireland exactly as planned. We saw a bit of land at Cherbourg on the French coast, then nothing until we came below the clouds at Paris."

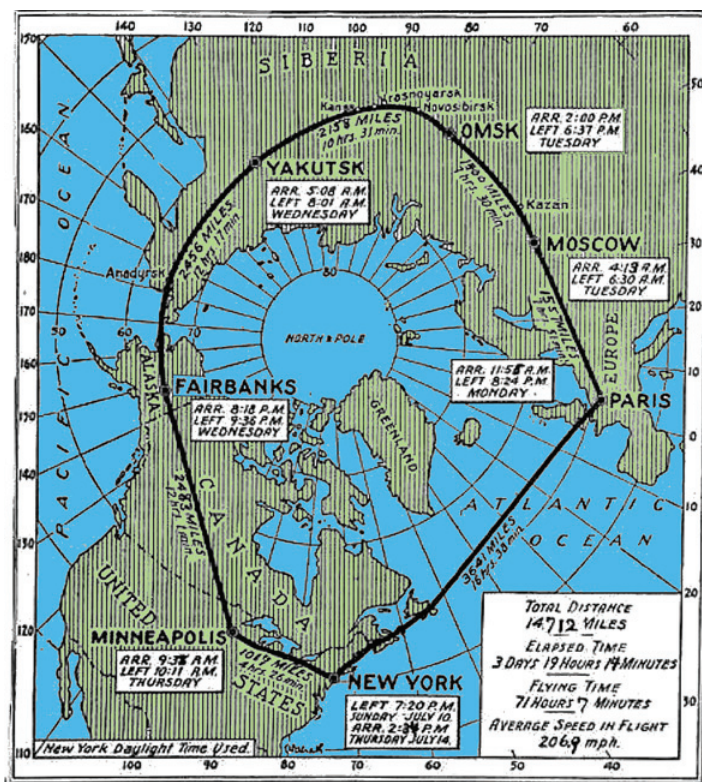
The flyers had kept in wireless contact with the world through New York and ships at sea all the way across the ocean. As they neared the Irish coast Hughes predicted the time of arrival at Le Bourget Airport almost exactly in a message picked up by the liner Ile de France.

He insisted in looking over the aircraft before leaving for a meal of soup, chops and vegetables. Flight Engineer Lund found the elevator control slightly bent but it was not serious enough for repair in Paris. Hughes also confirmed what long had been understood—that he would try to extend his transatlantic flight into a speed dash round the world.

Hughes said "During the flight the crew ate little and only drank six bottles of milk en route, they took no food, only water and cigarettes. We are taking on 850 gallons of gas to Moscow."



Howard Hughes during press briefing, most likely prior to the start of the Around the world flight. (Universal Newsreel photo from the Phil Stewart collection)



A colorized version of the map showing the route of Hughes' around the world flight. (Associated Press)

Hughes's flight to Paris was greeted as a remarkable scientific achievement showing the progress made in aviation since the Lindbergh flight. In the "Flying Laboratory" Hughes and his crew were able to cross the Atlantic in such comfort that they arrived fresh enough for an immediate take-off for Moscow.

Hughes had hoped to spend only two hours on the ground at Paris but it was found that the bottom of the fuselage and tail wheel was damaged. Hughes said "The damage probably occurred when the plane hit a bump in taking off at New York."

The flyers showed bitter disappointment when the damage that forced delay was discovered, as they rested after a meal at the aerodrome. Flight Engineer Ed Lund with the help of John Cook Sergeant mechanic assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Paris and recognized as an aviation expert repaired the damage with parts supplied by Air France. After remaining with the mechanics for several hours Hughes retired to the Field Commandant's quarters for some rest.

Hughes ordered the following provisions put aboard the plane for the flight to Moscow: 12 quarts of milk, two roast chickens, 20 quarts of coffee, five quarts of hot milk in vacuum bottles, four pounds of sugar, a basket of fruit, 15 pounds of dry ice and a quantity of milk chocolate.

At midnight Hughes announced repairs were completed and he planned to takeoff for Moscow as soon as possible. Speaking over the radio before his departure he said, "I certainly want to thank all these people at Le Bourget Field for the help they have given me."

July 12, 1938 Paris. Associated Press.

Ambassador Bullitt and the military personnel were again

on hand to bid farewell to the flyers. Two platoons of guards armed with rifles, formed a moving square around the plane from its hangar to the starting point. Mechanics had a hard time tuning up the engines. Just 39 minutes after the plane was rolled out of the hangar Howard Hughes and his four round the world flight companions took off at Le Bourget Airport at 1.24 am (8.24 pm Monday NYT.) for a 1,560 mile flight to Moscow as the second stage in their globe circling trip. Roaring down the Le Bourget field the Hughes plane rose into a moderate wind and a light intermittent drizzle, which had just begun. Though the takeoff seemed perfect, the plane's left wheel appeared seriously damaged as the machine rose into the air and French Air Corps officers expressed concern that the flyers might have difficulty landing at Moscow. The plane narrowly missed crashing as it roared into the air. The left wheel bounced several times and shattered in the air, apparently indicating Hughes had difficulty getting the plane into the air. The airfield's crash truck/ambulance started its engine as it appeared the plane might fail to clear a fence and crash either into a house at the left or a factory chimney at the right. Hughes piloted for the space right between the two obstacles and rose into the air as his wheels hit the end of the runway, clearing the fence by a few feet. Spectators held their breath as the silver ship climbed slowly and disappeared in the clouds bound for Moscow with the dangling wheel appearing to hang in the air.

The commander of Le Bourget Airport said "we are radioing him to take utmost precautions when landing at Moscow."

After leaving Paris the route was over Liege, Belgium, Cologne, Germany, past Berlin and on to Warsaw with no stops before Moscow.

Hughes in a broadcast at 11.15 pm EST relayed by the Columbia Broadcasting Co. in New York, while the plane was passing over the Danzig Free City, halfway on the Paris to Moscow hop said "as far as we can see here everything is okay." He added, "We are worried about those rumors from Paris about the landing gear. We have picked up quite a bit of speed and estimate we are making about 220 miles per hour at an altitude of 13,300 feet. We have been at 16,000 feet most of the way in order to stay above clouds which form ice on the plane the minute we get into them. We are now going down a bit."

Hughes had estimated the Paris to Moscow flight would require seven to eight hours.

Concerning reports from Paris on possible wheel damage, Albert Lodwick, Hughes personal Representative in New York said, "He believed they were unfounded and arose from the fact that Europeans were not familiar with the retractable landing gear used on the Hughes plane."

The National Broadcasting Co. in New York, later contacted Richard Stoddard the radio engineer who reported the plane's speed at 120 mph which was later corrected when Hughes came on the air. "Mr. Stoddard our radio engineer gave our speed incorrectly as he was sitting with his back to the instruments and could not read quite accurately. His reading of 120 miles per hour was incorrect as we were climbing." He then gave the correct speed as 185 mph at an altitude of 16,000 feet. Hughes also relayed they wanted to conserve their oxygen

supply as much as possible. We are using our oxygen supply very sparingly as the supply is limited.”

Following a seven hour and 51 minute flight Howard Hughes landed to a warm welcome in Moscow, with U.S. and Soviet dignitaries on hand. Hughes’ first words upon landing were: “Please refuel as quickly as possible because we would like to leave in 20 minutes.” Two hours and 15 minutes later they were ready for takeoff. As the Lockheed 14 taxied out a Russian soldier spotted the Lockheed Star on the ship’s tail and waved with joy. “Nozdarovia comrades!” he cried.

July 12, 1938 *New York Times* reported:

The cooperation between the Soviet Government and Howard Hughes in arranging the flight was a well kept secret. An intricate code was developed whereby Hughes could converse freely with the Russian speaking radio operators. One example of that code: 15-Bu-S-20-18-N-E, translated weather report as: ceiling 150 meters, broken clouds and showers, visibility 20 kilometers, wind velocity 18 kilometers from northeast. There was also a thoughtful arrangement by the Soviet Government of corn flakes and other American breakfast delicacies. However, Mr. Hughes by radio asked for and received a typical Russian breakfast including black bread. In his plane Hughes carried 700 letters to be postmarked at various stops for philatelists. There was also a letter delivered to the Soviet Ambassador to the United States home on leave in Moscow, with newspaper clippings on the baseball All Star game, and the Louis-Schmeling fight. The Ambassador was a big sports fan. The fliers were supplied with weather charts forecasting conditions for their flight across Siberia. This Soviet Government cooperation was in gratitude for the courtesies shown by the U.S. Army Signal Corps, to the Soviet transpolar fliers in 1937.

After the fliers supervised the refueling of the aircraft for the flight to Omsk, they loaded a case of mineral water but refused a gift of caviar.

The silver colored plane taxied to the runway and headed due eastward gleaming in the sunlight. On the 1,380 miles flight from Moscow to Omsk, Russian radio stations assisted in navigation permitting the fliers to be in constant communication with the ground. Large Russian broadcasting stations are playing music three to five minutes every half-hour to enable frequent checking of the plane’s radio compass.

Approximately 450 miles from Moscow Hughes reported all was well with the plane and it was heading due east. Russian communications stations have been ordered to check the plane’s bearings by radio to verify readings taken on the plane. The Soviet Charge D’affaires in response to inquiries said “there are plenty of landing fields on the fliers route but “Mr. Hughes was not very interested in them.”

Hughes and his crew were snatching sleep aloft as they flew, leaving ground time for speedy refueling.

Seven and one-half hours after leaving Moscow, Howard Hughes and his companions landed at Omsk in Western Siberia. The fliers were in constant wireless communication with Floyd Bennett Field. Albert Lodwick at Hughes Flight Headquarters was able to announce the safe arrival of the fliers at Omsk,

before that city could cable the arrival.

Dawn was just breaking and after four and a half hours at Omsk the fliers took off heading for Yakutsk 2,177 miles away in Siberia, the last scheduled Soviet stop. William C. Rockefeller, chief meteorologist for the flight, announced in New York that the Lockheed Super Electra would encounter showers and scattered clouds for half the distance, then it would be helped by record-breaking tail winds. The flight would take them over the Soviet steppes by Novosibirsk 200 miles east of Omsk, then passing Krasnoyarsk and Kansk, before landing at Yakutsk on the Lena River that empties into the Arctic Ocean. Maps across Siberia incorrectly showed the mountains 2,500ft lower than actual height. After 10 hours and 31 minutes over 2,177 miles they arrived in Yakutsk. Average speed for the flight was 207 mph.

July 13, 1938. The *New York Times* by wireless from Moscow.

Thursday July 14, 1938, following a three hour refueling stop at Yakutsk the fliers took-off on the last lap of their flight over the Soviet Union en route to Fairbanks, Alaska 2,457 miles away. The weather across the mountains in the Kolymak region which are upwards of 10,000 feet was reported as “middling” and getting worse between the Anadyr peninsula and Nome. Famous Soviet Arctic flier Sigismund Levanevsky had previously identified along the south coast of the Anadyr as an area of dense fog and hurricane winds.

Some anxiety for the fliers was caused when the United States Embassy in Moscow, was informed that radio connection with the Hughes plane was broken suddenly at 3.35 pm Moscow time. The connection was not re-established until 9 pm Moscow time when Hughes reported he had been in contact with American radio stations. The cause of the radio interruption was believed to be bad weather. An Army radio station in Seattle, Wash. had reported radio signals from the Hughes plane over the Anadyr peninsula. The Hughes radio station in Hermosa Beach, Calif., talked with radio operator Stoddard, and Stoddard sent greetings to his wife and the wives of navigators Thurlow, and Connor. Before Hughes left Yakutsk he telegraphed Moscow air authorities his warmest thanks for the cooperation he received in Soviet Russia. While crossing the Bering Strait he sent a farewell radio message to his Soviet friends.

Seven and a half hours after leaving Yakutsk the plane was over the Bering Sea separating Asia and America and crossing the International Date Line back to Wednesday. Shortly afterwards passing Teller, Alaska, and sighting Cape Prince of Wales, they were back over U.S. soil since leaving Floyd Bennett Field.

There was a welcoming crowd of several hundred at Fairbanks as the plane circled the field and made a graceful landing, completing the 2,456 miles in 12 hours and 17 minutes. Also on hand to welcome them was Mrs. Wiley Post, who was in Fairbanks to attend the dedication of a memorial to her husband and Will Rogers, killed August 15, 1935, near Point Barrow, Alaska, while on an Arctic flight. First out of the plane was Hughes who appeared tired but in good humor when Joe

Crosson, noted Alaska mercy flier shook his hand. Hughes stated; "the area over which they travelled was the worst of the flight, but fair weather conditions enabled them to keep a pace of 200 to 210 miles per hour as they scaled the treacherous mountains east of Yakutsk."

**Fairbanks, Alaska.
July 13, 1938. By
United Press.**

Howard Hughes and his four companions were eager to get back in the air. When asked for details of the flight over the great Siberian wasteland, Hughes replied: "I haven't time to talk now we must get back in the air and keep moving." His face was covered with a three day growth of beard, similar growths adorned his companions. The beards covered any sign of fatigue. Disdaining rest during the brief layover, the young millionaire conferred with Joe Crosson, famed "mercy flier" of the Arctic on flying conditions in the interior of the Canadian Northwest Territories, over which their route lay. While they talked airport attendants pumped 1,500 gallons of gasoline and 100 gallons of oil into the tanks of the silver Lockheed aircraft. The men were cheerful as they waited for the fueling and servicing of the plane's motors.

The fliers gave up hopes of hopping nonstop to New York when they found the Fairbanks runway was only 2,800 feet long. Considering the runway too short to take-off fully loaded, Hughes jettisoned baggage and sacrificed fuel. Just before takeoff Hughes said he would continue to New York if his gasoline supply held out, but would land at Winnipeg if it were in danger of becoming exhausted.

One hour and 18 minutes after landing in Fairbanks, the fliers were again in the air. Three hours later a message from the plane to the United Air Transport Station at Fort Nelson, said that Hughes planned to land at Winnipeg. The position given by the plane was only 450 miles out of Fairbanks, indicating that the plane's speed had been reduced to 150 mph due to crossing mountains where flying was perilous. The distance between Fairbanks and Winnipeg is 2,083 miles, from Winnipeg to New York is 1,297 miles, a total distance of 3,380 miles. Winnipeg was by-passed and the plane continued to Minneapolis where it was refueled and back in the air after 33 minutes heading for New York.

New York Times, Friday July 15, 1938

Just before the plane came in sight from behind the straggling clouds which seemed to stream from its wingtips,



The chaos associated with the arrival of Hughes at Floyd Bennet Field following the completion of the around the world flight. (Associated Press via the New York Daily News)

Albert L. Lodwick, Manager of the flight in a broadcast to the plane advised Hughes to taxi up to the administration building, and assured the reticent and retiring Hughes of an orderly reception and was in "no danger of being mobbed."

Twenty thousand well-wishers cheered as the plane circled Floyd Bennett Field in New York. Awaiting the arrival were Mayor La Guardia, Mr. Grover Whalen, Military and Political dignitaries. The plane shot earthward in a long straight incline,

Hughes made a "tails-up landing" with motors roaring. He applied the brakes and the fuselage settled on the tail wheel, as he slowly taxied up to a place in front of the administration building. Then at 2.37 pm New York time the historic flight of the five men around the world came to an official end.

After three days, 19 hours, and 17 minutes a new round the world record was established. From that time onwards the reception program went awry in a series of breakdowns in the elaborate plans for an orderly and dignified reception. Hughes had landed on a different runway from where the dignitaries were standing. They were waiting several hundred yards from where the plane finally alighted and had to sprint to get there in time to perform their official duties.

The plane's door opened and five weary-eyed men with bearded faces and clothing that was soiled and wrinkled stepped from an airplane of unblemished sheen into a bedlam of noise and confusion at Floyd Bennett Field. The program called for the large crowd to stay behind fences, and reporters to stay in a tented press area where the fliers would be brought for interviews and photographs. The 600 police officers on duty could not control the crowd the fliers were mobbed, and hemmed in by well-wishers. Hughes and his four companions were as helpless as robots in the hands of the crowd. Propelled from one spot to another for broadcasts and photographs, the fliers finally escaped to the privacy of Hampshire House where the four members of the crew were staying. Mr. Hughes stayed at the Drake Hotel where he has a suite. The reception program had called for Hughes to lay a wreath of lilies on the concrete star embedded at Floyd Bennett Field where Wiley Post ended his record breaking solo flight in 1933. The marker is inscribed:

"On this site Wiley Post landed the Winnie Mae completing the first solo flight around the world in 7 days, 18 hours, 49 1/2 minutes. Started July 15, 1933. Returned July 22, 1933."

Hughes never got to lay the wreath, someone else placed it there. Hughes later expressed regret that he had been deprived

of the privilege of paying his respect to the memory of a flier whose achievement he said "was the greatest of all time."

At a reception later at the home of Grover A. Whalen, President of the New York World's Fair, Hughes disclosed he had personally kept a 30 to 40 page log of the flight. He detailed the takeoff from Floyd Bennett Field as the most dangerous part of the flight due to the heavy load. He also stated "he was glad he did not take off from Yakutsk at night as the United States Hydrographic maps of Siberia were all wrong." They came across mountains in Siberia which the maps showed at 6,500 feet, only to find they were 9,000 feet and the plane had to climb sharply to avoid crashing"

Friday July 15, New York Ticker Tape parade.

Hughes was up early for a man that had flown 15,000 miles and slept little in the four previous days. Hurrying to a parade was a letdown after speeding around the world and sticking to a flight schedule. Hughes kept everyone who wanted to honor him waiting as he polished a speech for fear nervousness would tie his tongue in the presence of the dignitaries at City Hall. He got rid of his five day beard, and waited for a comb with fine enough teeth to suit him. He also had a clean suit delivered to the hotel. Hughes shared honors by insisting his four crew members ride with him in the parade up Broadway and provided cars for their wives. Hughes, Mr. Grover Whalen, President of the World's Fair, and a police officer were in the first car, in the second car were the four members of the crew. Behind them were the wives of the crew members also in an open car driven by a police officer. Hughes had also insisted that the 17 technicians, who provided the data that enabled him to maintain a precise schedule around the world, also be part of the festivities.

At City Hall, where he was greeted by Mayor La Guardia, in the presence of two former mayors, James J. Walker and John Patrick O'Brien. In his speech (condensed here) Mr. Hughes said, "I have written this out because I might get nervous and not say just what I want to, there is one thing about this flight I would like everyone to know. It was in no way a stunt. It was the carrying out of a careful plan. We who did it are entitled to no particular credit. We are not supermen. It functioned because it was carefully planned." Hughes belittled his own achievement, declaring it could be duplicated by any American commercial pilot flying a standard transport plane. "I have been asked what I considered the most important purpose of the flight. I do not know if any purpose has been served. However I do feel this:

The airplane was invented and originated in the United States. Since then the countries of Europe have taken from us, one-by-one all of the aviation records. Until at this time the United States does not hold one record.

The speed record for seaplanes is held by Italy. The speed record for land planes is held by Germany. England holds the altitude record and Russia, with its magnificent flight last year, the distance record.

Now if this flight has done a little to show American engineers can design and American workers can build just as fine airplanes, engines, and aircraft equipment as any in the world. If it should possibly increase the sale of American planes abroad and thus create a few new jobs for American workers in the aircraft factories of this country, then I shall feel well repaid for my time and effort."

Philadelphia Record

The Hughes flight proves the advancements in aviation, navigation, and scientific achievements, but also how the



An aerial view showing the crowds and press swarming Hughes' Lockheed on arrival. (Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum, XRA-4766)



Gen. Oscar Westover, Chief of the Army Air Corps, right; Congratulates Howard on his round the world flight. Hughes was a visitor in Washington today, and the chief of the Air Corps was one of the first to congratulate him. Photo dated July 21, 1938. (Library of Congress from the Harris & Ewing photo collection)



Secretary of State Cordell Hull, congratulates Howard Hughes on his round the world flight, photographed at the State Dept. on July 21, 1938. (Library of Congress from the Harris & Ewing photo collection)



fliers placed emphasis on the courtesy and assistance they had received from many countries over which they had passed, France, Britain, Germany, Russia, in furnishing radio and weather information. In other words there was a common denominator which transcends politics and nationalism, and a feeling that there are other bonds of international respect that give science precedence over ideology. Should we but know how to employ them, might resolve the present national hatreds, rivalries and threats of engulfing conflicts.

These men flew around the world and in less than four days established a common touch which diplomats have failed to accomplish in 10 times as many years. Perhaps the world should let the airmen take over diplomacy and diplomats the air.

After lunch at the Metropolitan Club, Mr. Hughes left for a rest in the country.

July 21, 1938. Washington DC. Press Club.

Howard Hughes, master aviator envisioned the future of aviation after being warmly received by the Washington Press Club. "I look forward to the day when we will see a ship as large as an ocean liner flying into New York harbor, and moved to the docks by tugs after landing on the water." Was he already thinking of the Spruce Goose?

Howard Hughes continued his love of aviation in many different ways, setting additional speed records, ownership of TWA, developing the HK-1 Hercules (aka *Spruce Goose*), and establishing technical advances in aviation, medicine, weather and communications.

For his contributions to aviation Howard Hughes received many honors. In 1938 the National Aeronautic Association presented him with the Collier Trophy for his epoch making Round the World Flight. →

Bibliography:

The Violet Sweet Haven Collection of 1938 newspaper articles.

New York Herald Tribune, July 12, 1938

New York Times, July 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 1938

Washington Post, July 12, 15, 1938

Philadelphia Record, July 15, 1938

Boston Sunday Post, July 24, 1938.

United Press, July 13, 1938

Boeing and the Collier Trophy, May 2012.

Howard Hughes, speaking at the National Press Club on July 21, 1938, before hundreds of government officials and representatives of foreign governments. Hughes today envisioned a future in aviation when giant flying boats, almost as large as modern ocean liners, will fly the Atlantic under conditions in which the element of luck will play no part. Speaking at the luncheon in his honor, he described in detail the type of flying craft and equipment he believes the future will see, but which is now nothing more than an aeronautical engineer's dream. (Library of Congress from the Harris & Ewing photo collection)

American Aviation Historical Society Journal, Winter 2018