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A tragic dynasty

The Getty family is one of the richest families in the world, yet it has been plagued by tragedy for generations. The family are proof that money cannot buy happiness.



Jean Paul Getty I (1892–1976)

Jean Paul Getty I was an American businessman. He founded the Getty Oil Company, and in 1957 was named the richest living American. **He was one of the world's first billionaires.**

A keen collector of art and antiques, he built the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California. He left over \$661 million to the museum when he died.

He moved to England in the 1950s and bought a 16th-century Tudor estate, Sutton Place, near Guildford. This house became the centre of the Getty Oil Company and he used it to entertain his British and Arabian oil friends. **Paul I was famous for his meanness.** He installed a pay phone in Sutton Place for his guests' use. He died there on June 6th, 1976, aged 83.

Getty married and divorced five times in his life. He had five sons with four of his wives.





Jean Paul Getty II (1932–2003)

Jean Paul Getty II was the son of Paul I's fourth wife, Ann Rork. His parents divorced when he was three. The young Paul II rarely saw his father, but he wrote to him. His father never answered the letters. He just returned them with the spelling mistakes underlined.

In 1956 he married his childhood sweetheart, Gail Harris and had four children. They moved to Rome where Paul II ran Getty Oil Italiana. They were a popular, party-loving couple, but alcohol and drugs took control of their lives. They divorced in 1964. Two years later Paul II married the Dutch model Talitha Pol (pictured). This also ended in disaster. She died of a drug overdose in 1971.

Paul II and Paul I had one thing in common – they were very bad fathers. **In 1973 Paul II's eldest son, Jean Paul III, was kidnapped in Rome, and a ransom of \$17 million demanded.** His grandfather refused to pay, saying 'I have 14 other grandchildren.' An envelope arrived from the kidnappers. Inside was Paul III's ear and a note: "This is Paul's ear. If we don't get some money within ten days then the other ear will arrive."

Paul I finally paid \$3 million and his grandson was released.



Paul II moved back to England and in 1997 became a British citizen. He had inherited \$2.5 billion from his father. He donated over \$2.25 million of this to the arts. In 1994, he married his third wife, Victoria Holdsworth. It was Victoria who helped him finally beat his drug addiction. He died in 2003 and is buried in Westminster Abbey.



Jean Paul Getty III (1956–2011)

Jean Paul Getty III spent his childhood in Italy. His parents divorced when he was nine and after that he saw very little of his father. By the age of fifteen he had been expelled from seven schools and he was already taking drugs. Then in July, 1973, when he was sixteen, came the kidnapping. **He was imprisoned in a cave in the mountains for five months**, until his ear was cut off and his grandfather finally paid a ransom. Paul III never recovered.

He returned to a lifestyle of parties and drugs. In 1974, aged eighteen, he married Gisela Zacher, a German model, and moved to Los Angeles. He was just nineteen when his son Balthazar was born.

Paul III was now an alcoholic and drug addict and in 1981, at just twenty-four years old, **he took a drug overdose and had a stroke.** He was in a coma for six weeks and afterwards he was paralysed, nearly blind and unable to speak. His father, Paul II, like his grandfather before, refused to help. Paul III and Gisela divorced in 1993 and he was looked after by his mother, Gail, until his death on February 5th, 2011. He was fifty-four.





Balthazar Getty (1975–)

Balthazar Getty, the great-grandson of Jean Paul Getty I, was born in California in 1975. He is an actor and a musician. When he was eleven he was sent to Gordonstoun School, an elite boarding school in Scotland which has educated three generations of the British royal family.

Balthazar has been working in films since he was twelve years old, when he was given the leading role of the schoolboy, Ralph, in the film *Lord of the Flies*. He's made many films since then, including *Young Guns II* and *Natural Born Killers*. He has also been in TV shows. Recently he has been appearing in the hit ABC series, *Brothers and Sisters*.

Balthazar has also worked as a fashion model and in 2000, he married fashion designer Rosetta Millington. They have a son, Cassius Paul, and three daughters. The marriage almost ended in 2008 when Balthazar was photographed kissing the actress Sienna Miller. He has since returned to his wife.

So far **Balthazar's life has been more successful than his father's and grandfather's.** He says: 'As a child, I really didn't know what it was to be a Getty. I had a pretty modest upbringing.'