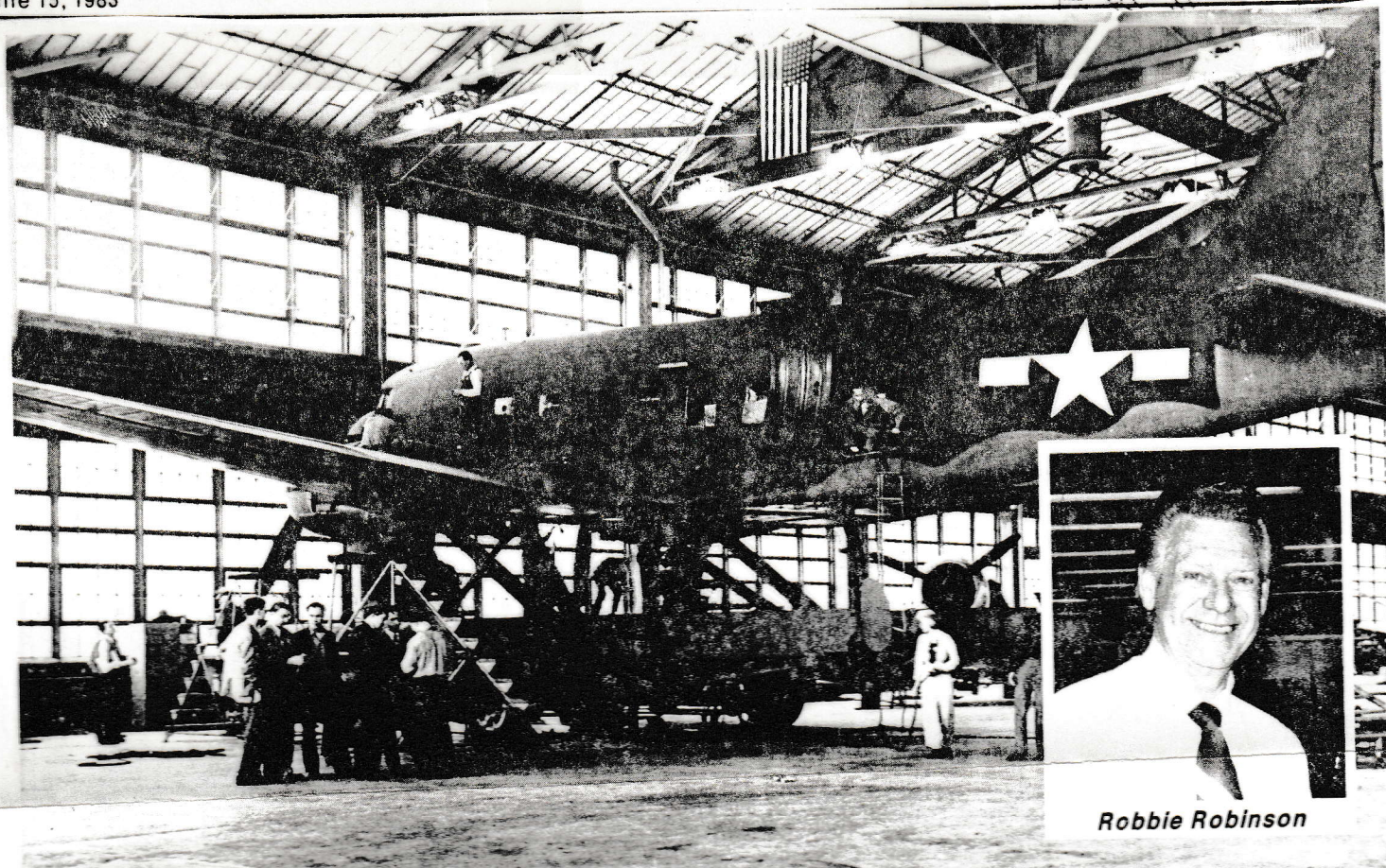




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Building the C-47C in Oklahoma City. This photo was taken in the fall of 1943.

Pontoons distinguish DC-3 derivative

Facilities engineer recalls his days on the C-47C

It is early summer 1944 somewhere in the South Pacific, and an olive drab Douglas C-47C moves slowly from under its camouflage netting, twin powerplants idling effortlessly.

A moment passes, and the pilot actuates his rudder, easing the airplane into the center of the narrow lagoon. He increases throttle for takeoff, the engines vibrate with power. Slowly, yet gracefully, the Waterbird accelerates, while situated below its wings, two large pontoons patter in staccato against uneven waves. The aircraft surges forward, then lifts steadily over the tangled green jungle and into an azure sky.

Engineering Group, Building 18, was chief of engineering design for the DAC Modification Center back in February 1943 and headed the design team that conceived this unique airplane.

These special-purpose aircraft, says Robbie Robinson, who returned to Douglas after many years, were similar to the land-based C-47 cargo aircraft but were designed for air-sea rescues. The twin pontoons were also used as fuel tanks and contained fuel pumps and retractable landing gear.

Each airplane weighed approximately 34,162 pounds fueled and was powered by twin Pratt &

inson. "They were designers, draftsmen, technicians, and crafts people, and many of them were women. We were a close-knit group of dedicated individuals with a great project," he says.

People from a variety of organizations were involved in the project, says Robinson. They included those sent from EDO, the manufacturer of the floats, representatives from the U.S. Army Air Corps sent from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and also involved employees of American Airlines.

The C-47 Waterbirds, of which only five were built, were used throughout the Pacific and in Alaska, and it is believed one of