

Odd Little Bird



Photo courtesy Robert F. Dorr

It had three engines and high wings reminiscent of the early Ford Trimotor, and as a commercial transport airplane the N-23 Pioneer fizzled, but in 1948, the Air Force thought it just might replace gliders in airborne assaults and serve as a rescue aircraft. The service ordered 23—calling them YC-125 Raiders—for testing. Despite some modifications from Northrop's original design, including a change of engines,

the Raiders proved to be significantly underpowered for either moving troops into forward areas or rescue work. Helicopters won out in both roles. Consequently, the YC-125s were sent to Sheppard AFB, Tex., for use as ground maintenance trainers. Shortly thereafter, in 1955, the Air Force declared them surplus.