

Historic Background Information on McMicken Dam

Compilation by Flood Control District of Maricopa County

&

Margaret McMicken-Bartol

Compiled in 2011

August 15, 2011

Margaret McMicken-Bartol
5820 S. Dysart Road
Avondale, AZ 85323

Mr. Tim Phillips
Chief Engineer and General Manager
Maricopa County Flood Control District
2801 W. Durango Street
Phoenix, AZ 85009

RE: McMicken Dam

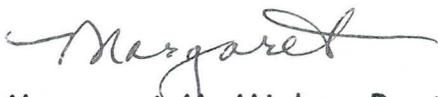
Dear Mr. Phillips:

It is with great interest that I read the article in the Arizona Republic on August 11, 2011 regarding the rehabilitation of McMicken Dam.

The dam was named for my grandfather, Kenneth McMicken. He was a great community leader and an avid soil/water conservationist. He was very honored the dam was named for him. I recently compiled two articles on him for local interest. I have included these for you, simply to inform you about the man...and maybe add a personal touch to your project.

Thank you for allowing his vision and passion to continue.

Sincerely,



Margaret McMicken-Bartol
enc.

Southwest Valley

Maricopa County set to begin \$98 mil McMicken Dam face-lift



Nick Oza/The Arizona Republic

A view of McMicken Dam, which traverses 18 miles of the West Valley.

Read more: <http://www.azcentral.com/community/swvalley/articles/2011/08/11/20110811maricopa-county-mcmicken-dam-face-lift.html#ixzz3g52vKDuy>

18-mile McMicken Dam has guarded W. Valley communities since 1956

by **Michelle Ye Hee Lee** - Aug. 11, 2011 12:00 AM
The Arizona Republic

Maricopa County will begin a \$98 million project to rehabilitate an aging West Valley dam that for 50-plus years has protected an area that recently burgeoned into a populous suburb.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1956 built the 18-mile McMicken Dam to protect Luke Air Force Base from flooding. The base flooded in the early 1950s when runoff from heavy rains flowed south through what is now Trilby Wash and inundated the base.

Since then, several cities and towns have developed in or along the floodplain near the earthen dam.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors last week approved a 10-year rehabilitation plan for the dam to ensure its safety. The design phase of the project is expected to be completed by 2014, according to the Maricopa County Flood Control District.

The dam begins in the desert north of Sun City West and stretches southwest through Surprise and into an unincorporated area north of Luke.

While there is no imminent danger to communities engulfed by the dam, the structure is getting old. There are safety issues that have developed over time because the dam was built on outdated standards, said Tim Phillips, the district's chief engineer and general manager.

"Most of the dams are built for a 50-year life, which, in theory, means at the end of 50 years you've reached when they no longer serve their purpose," Phillips said. "Our goal is . . . with some repairs and constructions on them, maybe they can last for another 50 years."

According to the 2010 census, the West Valley's population has grown by 69 percent since 2000 - the biggest increase in the Valley in the past decade.

All that growth means there are roads, residents and developments in the area now that were not taken into account when the dam was built, said Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson, who oversees the West Valley's District 4.

The preventive nature of flood-control dams means that if there is a danger, it won't become obvious until there is a flood - and then it is too late, Wilson said.

"It's kind of like, if you forget to pull the plug out of the bathtub and you forget about it," Wilson said. "You don't hear about it until it flows over the bathtub, and then you hear it from everybody. The dam enters your mind when it fails."

The Corps of Engineers and the district had an agreement to share the cost for designing the reconstruction. The Corps was to provide \$2.3 million of the \$4.9 million design cost. The Corps has paid \$361,000 to date, but there is no guarantee that Congress will approve more money toward the project, said Col. Mark Toy, commander and district engineer for the Corps' Los Angeles district.

The Board of Supervisors last week decided to put the county's agreement with the Corps on hold and move forward with the project.

Read more: <http://www.azcentral.com/community/swvalley/articles/2011/08/11/20110811maricopa-county-mcmicken-dam-face-lift.html#ixzz3g52s6sxd>

BITS OF HISTORY

*CityLine's featured column by the
Litchfield Park Historical Society*

McMICKEN DAM

by Margaret McMicken Bartol, granddaughter of Kenneth B. McMicken; and member, Litchfield Park Historical Society



Post Office Box 1936
Litchfield Park, Arizona 85340

The early developers and leaders of Litchfield Park both revered and feared a major force of nature – WATER. A reliable source of water was absolutely necessary to claim the fertile desert for agriculture, grow a city, and establish an industry. But water could be punishing and devastating as well. Due to the West Valley's sloping terrain and loose, sandy topsoil, a few inches of rain in a short amount of time could inundate the entire area. The "Trilby Wash Basin" runs southeast downward from Wickenburg, picks up along the eastern slope of the White Tank Mountains, and acts as a giant funnel directing rain water down towards the area west of the Agua Fria River. In this dry desert area, flash floods, particularly in the monsoon seasons, became the enemy of the new community.

As early as the 1920s and 1930s, Mr. Kenneth B. McMicken, Mr. W. W. Lane and Colonel Dale Bumstead recognized the necessity of protecting the farm areas and growing communities lying between the Agua Fria River and the White Tank Mountains from potential devastation. McMicken was the general manager of Southwest Cotton Co. – later Goodyear Farms – in Litchfield Park. These three men were instrumental in the formation of the Agua Fria Soil Conservation District in 1945, with Kenneth McMicken presiding as Chairman.

Their efforts to establish a preservation plan were spurred on in the summer of 1951 when three successive major storms resulted in direct flood damage totaling \$3 million. Rich farm lands and crops were washed away; miles of highways and railroads were washed out; telephone and power lines were swept away. Luke Air Force Base and the roads leading to it were inundated and impassable. Severe flood damage was sustained by the homes of people living on the Goodyear Farms acreage and in the towns of Litchfield Park, Goodyear and Avondale. The Goodyear Aircraft Plant and the Litchfield Naval Air Facility (now Phoenix/Goodyear Airport) were under water.

Following the great flood of 1951, massive coordinated flood control planning was begun. Senator Carl Hayden was asked to help set up a program between the Federal Government and local interests. The costs of flood protection could be shared by the two entities. In 1951,

Senator Hayden was successful in arranging for funds for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin designing and construction of the project. Meanwhile, the Agua Fria Soil Conservation District and the Irrigation District pooled funding. The U. S. Department of Agriculture assisted in the program and local landowners also contributed. These funds were used to build two small interim dams completed in May, 1954. This was the first flood control project in the nation to be completed under a shared program.

During the 83rd Congress, Public Law 209 was passed, which included the authorization to construct the Trilby Wash Detention Basin and Outlet Channel, now named McMicken Dam after Kenneth B. McMicken. On March 11, 1955, the U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations approved \$2,873,000 for that project. The State of Arizona Highway Commission, at its expense, constructed the bridge over the outlet channel. The Arizona Public Service Company, at its expense, relocated power and gas lines. Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, at its expense, moved lines where necessary. The Irrigation District deeded rights-of-way. Maricopa County acquired remaining

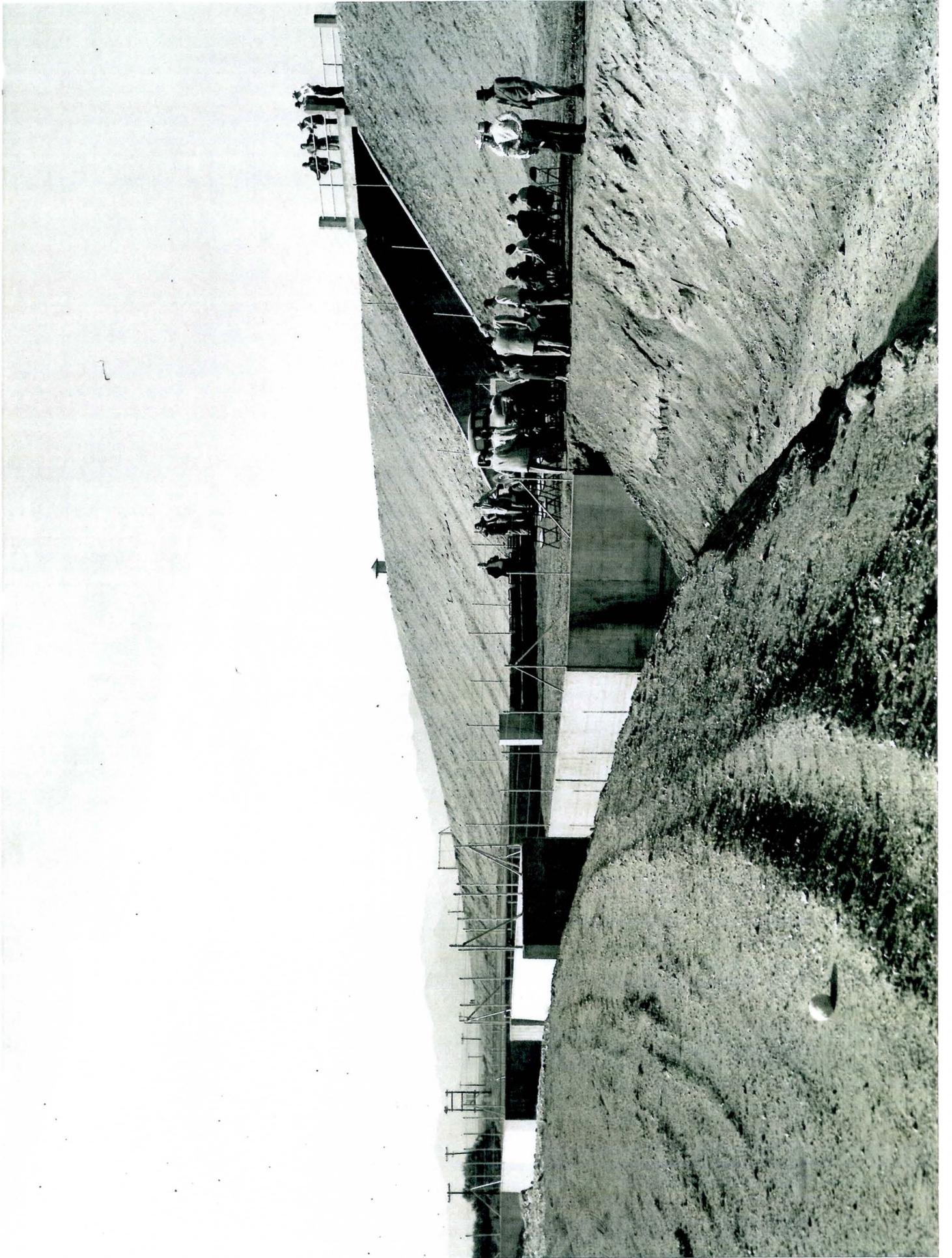
rights-of-way and flow easements. The construction contract was awarded to Fredericksen and Kasler of Sacramento, California. The entire project was under the direction of Col. Arthur Frye, Los Angeles District Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army. McMicken Dam was completed in July, 1956.

McMicken Dam is an earthen dam approximately 10 miles long, 34 feet high. The Outlet Channel is 6 miles long and the Outlet Wash is 4 miles long. It is located within the borders of the City of Surprise west of the 303, between Peoria Avenue and Happy Valley Road. For over five decades communities downstream have been afforded protection by McMicken Dam as a flood control structure. The dam is operated and maintained by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC). In the 1980s and again in 2005-2006, major modifications were completed to the dam to ensure continued



*Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth B. McMicken at the dedication
of the then newly-constructed McMicken Dam in 1956.
(From photo archive collection of Litchfield Park Historical Society)*

integrity of the facility. Despite the current drought conditions, this area is still very vulnerable to potential flash flooding from periodic rainstorms. Consequently, FCDMC continues to monitor the ability of the 55-year-old dam and channel to maintain the current level of flood protection for the benefit of the public. The expansion of urbanization and land changes need to be continually evaluated. As studies are completed, FCDMC will continue to make recommendations. Hopefully, these will mimic the pattern and inspiration established years ago by the collaboration of Senator Carl Hayden, Kenneth B. McMicken, and so many others.



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Sedation Day

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Produced with major support from La Loma Village/
La Loma Care center, Rosemary Lang-Fiebig, Realtor,
and Wigwam Golf Resort & Spa

Kenneth B. McMicken

Fondly called by his employees, "Patrón"

Margaret McMicken Bartol, Granddaughter of Mr. McMicken

Kenneth B. McMicken once was described as a philosophical cross between Will Rogers and Uncle Remus- "a man who has made Goodyear Farms everything a farmer dreams about." This sums up the smiling executive who spent part of his life building the 16,000 acre Goodyear Farms project into one of the outstanding irrigation units in the world.



a charter member and first President of the Litchfield Park Kiwanis Club. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of Litchfield Park School beginning in 1924. He served as Vice President and National Council Representative for the Roosevelt Council, Boy Scouts of America, and was a founding member of the Church at Litchfield Park.

...Continued on Page 2

McMicken was asked by President of the Board, P.W. Litchfield, to join the Goodyear organization in 1917. One of his earliest assignments was to study methods of raising cotton in the Valley of the Nile, Egypt. On his return to Arizona with a favorable feasibility report, McMicken undertook the task of raising cotton on the virgin desert land. Long staple cotton was in heavy demand for truck tires for USA forces overseas in World War I.

His knowledge of cotton growing took him to Peru where he was adviser to that nation's cotton industry, showing those growers the American way of cotton culture. In the scientific field, he was a leader in working with the University of Arizona to develop pure seed strains, and helped organize the Arizona Crop Improvement Association to produce better agriculture seeds.

In addition to being an authority on cotton, "K.B." developed noteworthy cattle feeding, soil conservation pest control methods, which made Goodyear Farms a leader in production and management. In 1943, he represented the entire United States cotton belt at meetings in Washington on boll weevil control.

His civic, professional and club activities spanned a multitude of organizations. He was

Mark your calendar

MEMBERS ONLY:

LPHS Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, January 30, 2010 - 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Refreshments

Special Program To Be Announced

(Invitations Will Be Mailed to All Active LPHS Members in January.)

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO

Litchfield Park Historical Society's 9TH ANNUAL FOUNDER'S DAY EVENT:

Historic Sites and Sacred Places of Litchfield Park
Saturday, March 27, 2010 - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Litchfield Park Historical Society is a proud recipient of an Arizona Humanities Council Project Grant in the amount of \$5,000.

The funds will contribute to the 2010 Founder's Day event, "Celebrating 100 Years of History: Historic Sites and Sacred Places of Litchfield Park."



In order that we might acknowledge the achievements of the past generations and preserve our heritage for future generations, it shall be the Mission of the Litchfield Park Historical Society to encourage an awareness of and an interest in the history of Litchfield Park and the Vicinity through the collection and display of historical facts, recorded history, artifacts and memorabilia and through special projects as determined by the membership.

Did you know? In 1966 Goodyear Farms was the largest block of irrigated crop land in Arizona, under one owner - 9150 acres.

Did you know? The first Litchfield Park Public Parks were begun in 1969 in the Tierra Verde Subdivision.

Board of Directors 2009

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*Rosemary Lang-Fiebig,
President*

Letter from the President

**Litchfield Park
Historical Society
continues to grow
and do.**

This past March, 2009 we presented a much-lauded, highly-successful

major community-wide event, "**Rancho La Loma Homestead - 90 Years of History.**" That event included narrated tours of the Litchfield/Denny families' Rancho La Loma estate via tractor-pulled wagons; presentation of a 15-minute video documentary produced by LPHS, "Tour of Rancho La Loma," starring Julia Denny Litchfield, granddaughter of Paul and Florence Litchfield; a large, beautifully-displayed collection of historic photos pertaining to the history and family life on "The Hill;" as well as wonderful musical performances by choral groups from schools in the Litchfield Elementary District. There was a "whopping" attendance of over 800 people who joined us that day!

Since moving into our offices at "Aunt Mary's House," LPHS has also been working to consolidate, sort and archive the numerous historic photos, artifacts, mementoes and books that have been donated to LPHS over

the past several years. Prior to our obtaining office space those items were, of necessity, housed in the temporary custody of various Board members at their personal residences. Now we finally have space to unite all those wonderful archive items in one location for cataloging and preservation!

As our latest endeavor, LPHS will be initiating Saturday Open Houses on December 5, 12 and 19 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. So, please come to visit LPHS and view the first of a series of periodic historic photo and artifact displays that will be on exhibit.

LPHS has a number of other events and projects on our planning board - and, as you can imagine, all of these things take money to implement. We need your help to provide the revenues needed for archiving, preserving and sharing the history of Litchfield Park and its environs. Your past support has been very gratifying and appreciated. With on-going support from our members and the community as a whole, we hope to be able to continue - perhaps even increase - the number of public events and historical resources we can make available for the community.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

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...Continued from Page 1

Kenneth was a member of the Farm Bureau Federation of Arizona, past president of the Arizona Crop Improvement Association, president of the Arizona Cotton planting and Seed Distributors, director of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the Agua Fria Soil Conservation District, Chairman of the Board of the Arizona Citrus Growers...just to mention a few.

Mr. McMicken was a prime mover in efforts to accomplish adequate flood control for Trilby Wash. "McMicken Dam" is part of an Army Corps of Engineers project, which was completed in 1956, to protect the entire West Side area from ravages of flash floods. In recognition for his untiring work and

leadership the dam was named in his honor and stands today continuing to provide vital protection.

Kenneth retired from Goodyear Farms in 1958 at the age of 76. He stepped down as Vice President and General Manager of Goodyear Farms after 40 years of service. He remained a Director and Consultant for the Farms until his death in 1959.

Kenneth Bruce McMicken was one of the best known and beloved men in the field of Agriculture in the state of Arizona. His reputation was highly regarded in the far corners of the world. His civic and community activities helped erect a town and lay the foundation for present day Litchfield Park. He was truly an outstanding leader.

Did you know? The Litchfield Park Library Association was established in 1969. George Lauman, Barbara Robey, Dave Jenkins, Ruby Cunningham and Jane Purcell were the original members.

#118

Damaged Dam Goes Unclaimed

By EDYTHE JENSEN
Gazette County Reporter

A dam nobody owns is going to cost millions of dollars to repair, Flood Control District Engineer Bill Mathews told the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

The board voted unanimously Monday to fund a study to estimate repair costs on McMicken Dam north-

west of Phoenix. The dam, built with unbudgeted federal funds at the urging of the late Sen. Carl Hayden, was damaged in 1977.

Although it was built on county land, neither Maricopa County nor the federal government will claim it, Mathews said.

THE STUDY, which is expected to cost about \$100,000, may help prod the federal government into footing repair bills, Mathews added.

McMicken Dam was built near 115th Avenue and Pinnacle Peak Road across the Trilby Wash in 1956. Its unorthodox beginnings are blamed by Mathews for the dam's predicament.

"It was funded under Air Force general maintenance funds after the late Sen. Carl Hayden appealed to Congress for the dam. The senator made a plea for McMicken on the basis that Luke was a strategic base during the Korean conflict and could be damaged by flooding," Mathews said.

SINCE construction funds were not budgeted by the Air Force, the Air Force today refuses to claim the dam. The county still owns the land on which it was built, but Mathews told the board local government would be in better shape today if it had given that land to the Air Force after the dam was completed.

"Can we give it to them for a Christmas present?" board Chairman Tom Freestone asked jokingly.

Although McMicken cost approximately \$1.7 million to build, it will cost more than \$3 million to repair, Mathews said, adding damage to the dam in 1977 resulted in flooding of hundreds of acres near the Air Force base in 1978 and 1979.

"MUCH OF the

damage was to irrigation districts, affecting farmers in the area," Mathews said. One irrigation district has agreed to help pay for repair costs, he added.

Supervisor Hawley Atkinson said he has been in contact with Rep. Bob Stump D-Ariz., and has been

informed the county has a right to seek federal funds for the dam repair.

Atkinson said he hoped the study would give Luke Air Force Base the ammunition to ask for the funds in order to protect its facility from flood damage.

PG. 5-12-81

From library call # 007.109

U.S. Republic
5-12-81

#7

County OKs study of cost to repair west Valley dam

AK 5-12-81
No one wants to claim ownership of McMicken Dam, a 7½-mile earthen structure that once protected Luke Air Force Base and the west Valley from flooding, but everybody wants it fixed.

Maricopa County's supervisors, sitting Monday as the board of the county's Flood Control District, authorized a study to determine how much it will cost to repair the dam.

The board, although not claiming ownership, is concerned that the county could be liable for future flood damage that might result without the repairs.

William Mathews, the district's general manager, estimated it will cost his office \$100,000 to do the study. He said a "very rough estimate" on repairs is \$3 million.

McMicken Dam was built in 1956 for about \$1.7 million as a detention basin for Tribly Wash. Its main purpose was to protect the Air Force base, Mathews said. The funds were appropriated by Congress directly, instead of through the Air Force or the Army Corps of Engineers, he said.

As a result, neither the Air Force nor the Army claims ownership. The county received ownership of the land, which may mean it also owns the earthen structure, Mathews said.

The dam was breached in 1977 because of progressive settlement and cracking. Mathews said that was done because a disaster could have resulted if it broke during a flood.

In 1978 and 1979, the Maricopa County Water Conservation District 1, a major irrigation system in the west Valley, and the base both sustained flood damage because of the breaches, he said.

The conservation district is so concerned about future flooding that it has agreed to put up as much as half the cost of repairing the dam, Mathews said. Luke officials also have made attempts to get federal funds, he said.