

Richard A. Bennett  
Senator, District 18



3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

**Joint Standing Committee on Transportation on  
LD 2239, Resolve, to Rename a Bridge in the Town of Mechanic Falls the Bill Dunlop  
Memorial Bridge  
March 5, 2024**

Senator Chipman, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to sponsor LD 2239, "Resolve, to Rename a Bridge in the Town of Mechanic Falls the Bill Dunlop Memorial Bridge."

Forty years ago, Bill Dunlop of Mechanic Falls disappeared while sailing his tiny sailboat, Wind's Will, somewhere in the South Pacific. The stories of his trips and adventures in a boat "a little larger than a bathtub" are legendary.

Bill is best known for his 1982 trans-Atlantic crossing in Wind's Will, which set a world record for a solo eastbound crossing in the smallest boat. Although he completed it, this trip was far from an easy afternoon sail on a lake. During a gale on this transatlantic trip, Bill had to harness himself to the boat's mast to prevent himself from being swept overboard by the huge waves. The seawater destroyed most of his canned food.

Sailing in the days before use of GPS was widespread, he relied on a \$16 sextant for navigation. His boat had a radio but no backup engine. After his courageous 78-day voyage, Bill was given a parade in Mechanic Falls and honored with a speech from Governor Brennan. Many locals were calling the town "Dunlopville" on the day of the celebration.

Ready for a new challenge, Bill decided to circumnavigate the world in the Wind's Will. He left Portland in July 1983 and sailed down the Atlantic coast, through the Panama Canal, and across the Pacific. Bill was only 43 when he went missing in 1984. He was sailing from the Cook Islands, 3,000 miles east of Australia, when he was likely hit by an incredible storm that caused 50 mph winds on land, likely much worse at sea. A note in Bill's handwriting was found in a margarine tin washed ashore in Queensland, providing hope that he was still alive. Unfortunately, despite search efforts, Bill was never found.

If you are interested, you can follow real-time news stories about his adventures and the tragedy of his disappearance at [EnchantedAcresFarm.com](http://EnchantedAcresFarm.com).

Bill Dunlop was an incredible adventurer and sailor. He took death-defying trips and traveled the world, bringing world attention to Mechanic Falls and inspiring people to take adventures for their own. He continues to inspire all who are adventurers – which encompasses most all of us. It is fitting that this bridge be named after such a remarkable man. I strongly urge you to support LD 2239, which was approved unanimously by the Town Council and strongly supported by the local historical society and by Bill's family. Thank you for your consideration.

TOWN OF  
*Mechanic Falls*

EST. 1893

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February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

To Whom it May Concern,

We the Town Council of Mechanic Falls recently voted unanimously to support the Mechanic Falls Historical Society's attempt to name the Rt.121 bridge (#2540) over the little Androscoggin river, "The Bill Dunlop Bridge". Mr. Dunlop brought positive recognition to the Town of Mechanic Falls through his historic record-breaking sailing journeys. The Mechanic Falls Town Council stands committed to this bridge naming in honor of Bill Dunlop, and encourages the State Legislature to approve this request.


Thank you for your consideration.

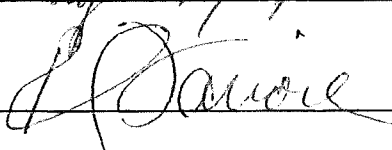
Respectfully,

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Tarsha Downing, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Darrell Young, Vice-Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Paula Stotts

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Stanley Morgan

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ray Lavole