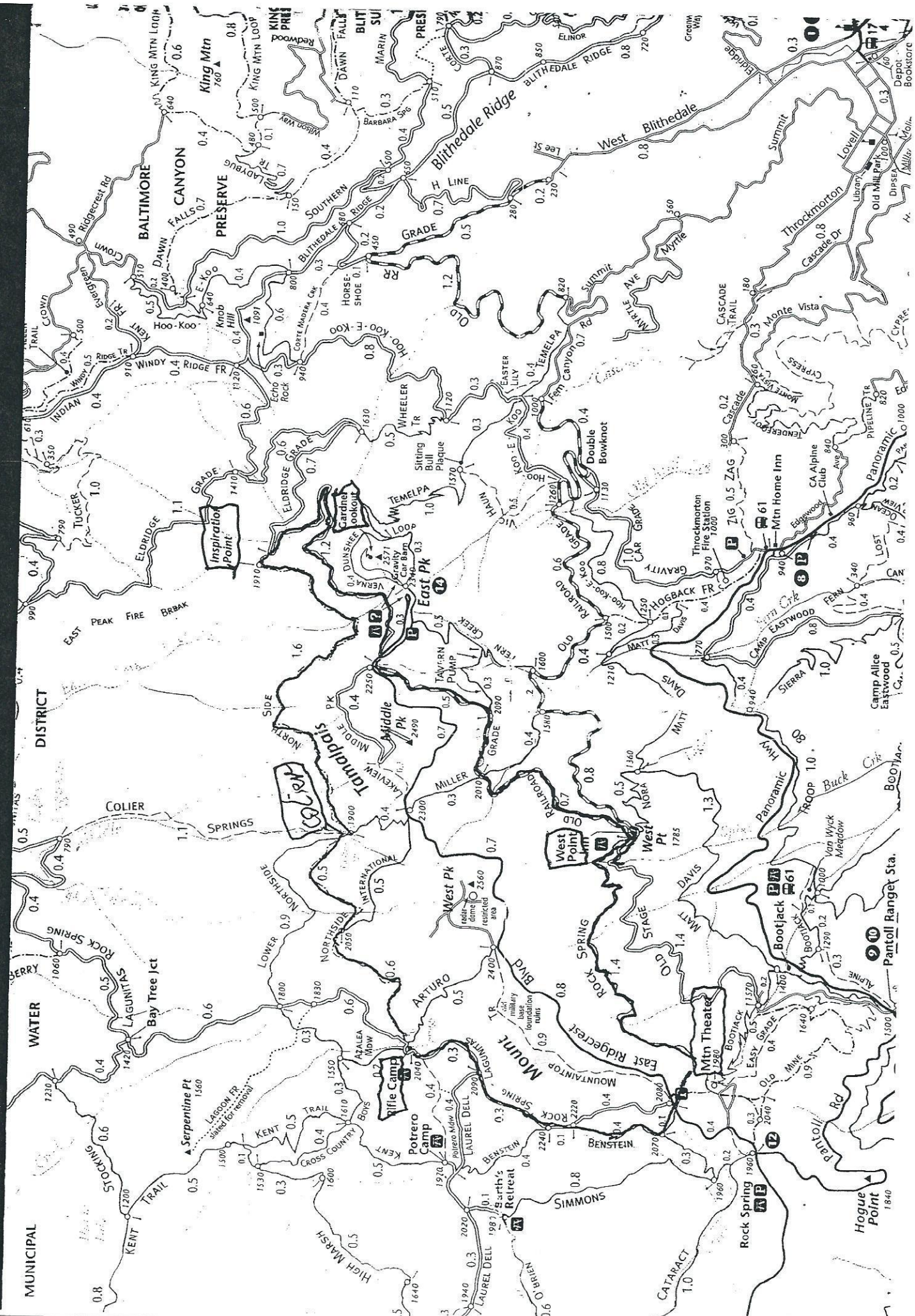


1st Annual CAC Mt Tam Circumambulation
9/23/2017; 10 am – 4 pm, with pot luck at CAC after

1. **Mountain Play Theater (elevation 1980')**
Welcome and self introductions; Readings from: "The Long Road Turns to Joy" by Thich Nhat Hahn, and "Opening the Mountain".
2. **Rifle Camp (2040')**
Hike to Rifle Camp via Benstein Trail, Lagunitas Fire Rd (1.2 mi)
Reading from: "Circumambulation" by Gary Snyder; group engagement and comments about what the hike means to you.
3. **Colier Spring (1900')**
Hike to Colier Spring via Northside Trail (1; 2.2)
Reading: "Sun Charm: Around Right or Left" by Michael Scott; brief meditation chant by Thich Naht Hahn.
4. **Inspiration Point (1910')**
Walk in solitary silence (spaced apart on trail) to Inspiration Point via Northside Trail (1.1; 3.3 mi)
1st of three short readings by Tom Killion: "Tamalpais".
5. **Vera Dunshee Loop trail (2340')**
Hike to picnic area at base of East Peak via Eldridge Grade (1.5; 4.8)
Following lunch, circle of East Peak keeping summit to our right (1; 5.8).
Stop along the way for the 2nd short reading: "Just A Mountain."
6. **East Peak summit and Gardner Lookout (2571')**
Optional short steep hike up north side boardwalk trail (.5; 6.3). 3rd short reading on summit. Regroup in picnic area; restrooms available
7. **West Point Inn (1785')**
Hike down to West Point Inn via RR Grade (1.7; 8). Reading: "A Special Place" by Tom Killion. Discussion of "special places" people have enjoyed.
8. **Serpentine Power Spot and return to Mountain Play Theater (1980')**
Return via Rock Spring Trail (1.4; 9.4). Stop at serpentine outcrop for final reading: "Hills of Home" poem by Gary Snyder. Discuss what people would like for next circumambulation. Arrive at Mountain Play Theater about 4pm and depart for potluck dinner at CAC Alpine Lodge.



Opening the Mountain; Circumambulating Mount Tamalpais: A Ritual Walk

ON OCTOBER 22, 1965, three poets “opened” Mount Tamalpais, just north of San Francisco, by walking around it and chanting at stops along the way. Forty years later, the ritual begun by Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, and Philip Whalen has become a tradition. Wherefore? Up we can understand. The peak-bagger climbs mountains that he may beat his chest. But around one?

In *Opening the Mountain*, Snyder is quoted by Michael Farrell Scott as saying he originally meant the walk to “consecrate Tamalpais as a sacred mountain for future generations to do the same kind of pilgrimage on.” Borrowing from Indian, Tibetan, and Japanese influences, the poet trio in 1965 stopped at points that felt significant, chanting sutras, mantras, and a charmlike Dhâranî for Removing Disasters. Thus their “opening” or “intentional ceremony” was a veneration inspired by the Tibetan practice of circling revered objects clockwise, whether plant, person, or mountain.

Following the poets’ example, the Tamalpais walk-around “less than fifteen miles” as it rises over 2,500 feet to the summit and descends to the starting point. The circumambulators mime “the way of the sun” by keeping the mountain always on their right. Solar significance extends to choice of calendrical dates, usually on a weekend closest to the current solstice or equinox.

Although Shinto influence and Buddhist practices of walking meditation underlay the poets’ original impetus, Snyder urges others to be as creative as they like: “The main thing is to pay your regards, to play, to engage, to stop and pay attention. It’s just a way of stopping and looking — at yourself too.”

Thich Nhat Hahn – The Long Road Turns to Joy – A guide to Walking Meditation

Anyone can Do It

Walking meditation is meditating while walking. We walk slowly, in a relaxed way, keeping a light smile on our lips. When we practice this way, we feel deeply at ease, and our steps are those of the most secure person on Earth. All our sorrows and anxieties drop away, and peace and joy fill our hearts. Anyone can do it. It takes only a little time, a little mindfulness and the wish to be happy.

Take my hand

Take my hand
We will walk
We will only walk
We will enjoy our walk
Without thinking of arriving anywhere
Walk peacefully
Walk happily
Our walk is a peace walk
Our walk is a happiness walk

Nourishing Steps

Walking meditation is like eating. With each step, we nourish our body and our spirit. When we walk with anxiety and sorrow, it is a kind of junk food. The food of walking meditation should be of higher quality. Just walk slowly and enjoy the banquet of peace.

Kiss the Earth

Walk and touch peace every moment
Walk and touch happiness every moment
Each step brings a fresh breeze
Each step makes a flower bloom under our feet
Kiss the Earth with your feet
Print on Earth your love and happiness
The Earth will be safe
When we feel safe in ourselves.

Healing Mother Earth

Walking mindfully on the Earth can restore our peace and harmony, and it can restore the Earth's peace and harmony as well. We are the children of the Earth. We rely on her for our happiness, and she relies on us also. Whether the Earth is beautiful and fresh, and green, or arid and parched depends on our way of walking. When we practice walking meditation beautifully, we massage the Earth with our feet and plant seeds of joy and happiness with each step. Our Mother will heal us, and we will heal her.

Touching Peace

If you think that peace and happiness are somewhere else and you run after them, you will never arrive. It is only when you realize that peace and happiness are available here in the present moment that you will be able to relax.

In daily life there is so much to do and so little time. You feel pressured to run all the time. Just stop! Touch the ground of the present moment deeply, and you will touch real peace and joy.

Walking Peace

Peace is the walk

Happiness is the walk.

Walk for yourself

And you walk for everyone.

Peace is every step

Peace is every step.

The shining red sun is my heart.

Each flower smiles with me.

How green, how fresh all that grows.

How cool the wind blows.

Peace in every step.

It turns the endless path to joy.

Gratefulness

We who have two legs can easily practice walking meditation. We must not forget to be grateful. We walk for ourselves, and we walk for those who cannot walk. We walk for all living beings – past, present, and future.

Circumambulation

This ritual walk is most commonly described as circumambulating Mt. Tamalpais. The word *circumambulation* is both rich and distinctive. Literally it means to walk (*ambulare*) around (*circum*), though of course the order is reversed to "around walk." When the small group of hikers is asked who they are, Matthew will respond with, "We're circumambulating the mountain," leaving the questioner fully apprised or so perplexed that the conversation ends. The spoken word itself, "circumambulation"—that is, its phonetic expression, its physical manifestation, its air-disturbing ripples and eddies, the way it splices mouth, tongue, and lips in a rolling, multisyllabic sequence of pleasurable out-rushing sound—has a remarkably full and satisfying mouth feel. OK, six syllables is a mouthful, but the particular combination of sounds is comforting—more so than most six-syllable constructions.

"Circumambulate" sounds to many ears like "circumnavigate"—a related word. Indeed, when describing the circumambulation, often as not those unfamiliar with the concept will say "circumnavigate," as though having uttered "circum," they find their synaptic path set on "navigate," not "ambulate." Undoubtedly, more Americans walk on land

than sail on water, yet the word *circumnavigate* is usually first out of their mouths, paradoxically as though they were more at home on water than land. Or maybe the historic rounding of the planet via ship enters the mind. Perhaps the unanticipated *ambulate* is ambushed by the all-too-familiar *navigate*. Yet we amble without much mishap, but when mishap occurs, we can't wait for the ambulance. Without doubt this is an ambulating or a walking ritual, not an easy walk, let alone a casual stroll; it is sufficiently taxing that by the end, there's a feeling of accomplishment for those who make it. Some first-timers unable or unwilling to proceed turn back along the initial ascent.

ask for engagement, comments

Reading #3

Sun Charm: Around Left or Right

Michael Farrell Scott

Circumambulating, to walk a circle around, is a ritual term with sacred and magical meanings, incorporated in many contemporary beliefs and practices, but predating most if not all of them. Older than Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, the practice of walking a circle around has been adopted from previous ritual practices and made integral to newer belief communities. The ancient practice of circumambulating is also expressed in life cycle rites, community building, and even the destruction of an adversary. In the sacred sense, circumambulation is the movement around a holy object or the moving of a holy object around in a circle to influence or honor it. Robert Frost's two-line poem elegantly expresses the magical notion of the power at the center of circles.

We dance round the ring and suppose,
But the secret sits in the middle and knows.³⁰

The poem recognizes the power of the circle, but also paradoxically keeps its secret, or at least its mystery, by not naming it. Walking or dancing around it sets it apart.

For the psychologist C. G. Jung exploring human archetypes, circling was a journey of the emerging self:

The goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self . . . everything points toward the center. This

insight gave me stability, and gradually my inner peace returned.³¹

In Brahman ritual, sunwise, or clockwise, movement is *pradaks'hina*. In Latin the term is *dextratic*; among Celts *deasil*. All terms derive from the same root, meaning "the right." The right is auspicious; right is the right way. Life cycle rites of birth, initiation, marriage, blotting out sins, death, among numerous other significant cultural activities, include sunwise circumambulations.³²

The circuit in the opposite direction is called *prasavya* in Sanskrit, *cartuasul* in Celtic, and *withershins* (or *widdershins* or *widershins*) in English. The English word originated in Middle High German, meaning "to go against," and entered English in the early sixteenth century.³³ Its essential meaning is "in a direction opposite to the usual," "the wrong way," or "in a direction contrary to the apparent course of the sun when one is facing south."³⁴ In Scotland, where the term is commonly used, it means "unlucky or causing disaster." The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides many examples, including this one from nineteenth-century Scotland: "The fishermen, when about to proceed to the fishing, think they would have bad luck, if they were to row the boat 'withershins' about."³⁵ The word figures in several superstitions and is associated with witchcraft, explains Random House's "Mavens' Word of the Day": "It was

said that if you *walked widdershins* around the church three times at night, you would see the devil looking out at you from the church porch.³⁶ The meaning is unnatural or anti-natural, sinister as in inauspicious, ill-omened or left, malign influence, misfortune, and death. "Along with prayers recited backwards, it constitutes the great weapon of sorcerers in Celtic and German countries."³⁷

Circumambulating can be understood as a solar charm, representing the daily spinning of the earth, and the apparent sun rising in the east, passing overhead and setting in the west. When facing south (in the Northern Hemisphere), the sun appears to rise to the left and set to the right; it is left to right, clockwise and by extension "natural" and "appropriate." But when facing directions other than south, the left-right orientation is lost and so too the apparent clockwise solar movement. In reality, the sun only appears to rise and set; in fact the earth spins to make night and day as it reveals itself to the sun. All planets, including the earth, orbit the sun counterclockwise. If this is how the planets move, how then did counterclockwise take on negative meaning while clockwise became positive?

Perhaps the answer lies in the sun-dominated seasonal changes on earth. The year's two equinoxes (fall or autumnal and spring or vernal) are straightforward: a day when light and dark are of equal length. But the two solstices (summer, the longest day of light, and winter, the shortest day) are more perplexing, and at the winter solstice more threatening. The shortest day of the year, the day of least sunlight and most darkness, appears to extend itself as if the sun were stuck. Solstice means sun-stopping, or stasis. In the Northern

to return, it's not hard to imagine the need to affirm the return of life-giving energy of the sun—a reassuring clockwise movement.

So the hike around Mt. Tamalpais is clockwise, keeping the peak to the right, at least for most of the way around the mountain. This direction is profoundly in keeping with ancient traditions. It is a solar charm, freighted with ethical meaning. What it shares with many circular spiritual walks is the mimicry of the earth's (elliptical) movement around the sun, source of energy fundamental to life on earth, and the seeking of profound knowledge and unity.

Reading #4

Tamalpais, beautiful coastal mountain, rising from Pacific waves and falling into bayside marshes. Crowned in silver rock and wreathed in manzanita. Grassy slopes and twisted laurels face western winds, firs grow on moist north slopes, redwoods in canyons. Above summer's bright fog roof, down southern and eastern flanks, a chaparral cloak of miniature trees; and everywhere in spring a world of flowers.

Just a mountain, one of four high points ringing San Francisco Bay: St. Helena to the north; Diablo in the east; Hamilton far south; and Tamalpais, the Western Mountain. Lowest of the four, Tamalpais is most exalted in California's remade human world. Standing sentinel above the Golden Gate, where snowmelt and rainfall culled from Shasta to the southern Sierra meet the salty Pacific, this mountain has been a gatepost for myriad immigrants entering San Francisco Bay. For those who have stayed and built their cities along its shores, Tamalpais beckons with the mystery and delight that high places evoke. Dark bar across San Francisco's northern horizon, touching the winter clouds, rising above tongues of summer fog. Just a mountain, but fixed in the imagination of a city.

Tamalpais: a place to walk. Close enough for an afternoon ramble, small enough to circle in a day's hike. A place to recognize the mysterious beauty of oneness and separation, of endless vistas and unique plant worlds. Surrounded by water on three sides, meeting point of many climates, clothed in such varied and intricate life. Mountain source of springs and streams, storehouse of waters, soil-giver of forests and sparkling salt marshes.

Just a mountain, a part of our shared earth. A place for small pilgrimages to remember this is what we have, this is what we come from. A grassy precipice soaring above the blue Pacific, a laurel-ringed boulder. We who bestow names, who imagine the world from within our human selves: what meaning shall we give this beautiful place?

drove up Tamalpais with Gary Snyder's friend Bob Greensfelder and Bob's daughter Sara. They parked at Rock Springs and, according to Gary, "David stood at the head of the meadow near where the old Rock Springs tank was, looked around, then said, 'We should go over there.' So he headed off, walking slowly. Crossing the road and going up the next little hill to the west, he went straight to the serpentine outcropping and said, 'This is a special place.'"¹

A SPECIAL PLACE

Today I stand looking south over miles of falling ridges, first forested, then bare grass, to the bay and sparkling city beyond. The serpentine outcrop is at my feet, on my right the Pacific shines to the fog-barred horizon. On my left the soft meadow-bowl of Rock Springs collects water that flows and falls through a steep cleft at the hinge of the mountain, where Cataract Creek, rushing through oak and laurel, tumbles down to a redwood forest far below.

Here at the hinge, where Bolinas Ridge meets the rocky summit wall of Tamalpais, serpentine boulders pierce the hilltop like blue dragon's teeth. Thirty-some years ago, in the mid-1970s, Hopi elder David Monongye

A few years later some of Gary's friends were looking for a new "station" to replace the defunct Rock Springs water tank on the circumambulation route Snyder had opened around Mt. Tamalpais back in 1965 with fellow poets Allen Ginsberg and Philip Whalen. They remembered David Monongye's observation and suggested that the serpentine outcrop become the new Station Four, known by circumambulators today as Serpentine Power Point. This knoll is not the high point of Tamalpais, but in many ways it is at the mountain's center. Beyond it to the west one sees only ocean; to the north and south lies the coastal ridge; to the east is the mountain itself, with the Mountain Theater just beyond a wooded knoll. Here

is the mountain's hinge, the junction of its main features, the headwaters of three of its principal watercourses: Lagunitas Creek, Redwood Creek, and Webb Creek. To understand Tamalpais's topography, this is a good place to begin.

Lagunitas Creek, which drains the entire north side of the mountain, is Tamalpais's largest watershed. Along its course are the reservoirs that supply Marin County with most of its drinking water, fed by smaller streams running down the north slopes of Tamalpais's main ridge from Rock Springs, Rifle Camp, Collier Spring, Redwood Spring, and other sources. Because Tamalpais was first popularized by hikers arriving from San Francisco, the north side of the mountain is called the "backside," and it remains wetter, wilder, and more remote than the "frontside," which faces south.

The main ridge of Tamalpais runs east-west, forming the only major east-west landscape feature in the Bay Area. Serpentine Power Point is the western terminus of this ridge, while the East Peak fire lookout—the mountain's highest point—marks the other end. Redwood Creek, running through Muir Woods to Muir

Beach, drains the mountain's southern slopes, along with smaller Corte Madera Creek in Mill Valley. On the mountain's western flank, Webb Creek falls from Pan Toll down Steep Ravine to the sea. To the east the summit ridge drops abruptly to bayside marshes fed by little streams gathered into San Anselmo Creek and the estuary of Corte Madera. Between these watersheds rise the three peaks of Tamalpais proper. Extending along the mountain's western side is the high ridge system that runs parallel to the coast from Muir Beach northwards, meeting with Tamalpais's summit ridge around Serpentine Power Point, and then continuing along Bolinas Ridge to Olema and Tomales Bay. This is the landscape world of Tamalpais, whose features are invested with the poetic lore that gives the mountain its special place in the cultural imagination of Northern California.

* * *

Gary Snyder, in his modest but elegant way, has done much in the last half-century to revive and deepen the special sense of place associated with Tamalpais, though he is but one in a long line of poets and artists

Hills of Home

Gary Snyder

I.

Today is like no day that
came before

I'll walk the roads and trails to Tamalpais.
one clear day of fall,
wind from the north
that cleans the air a hundred
miles

A little girl in a dark garage:

her home in the redwood shade,
her father there
he saws

a board

(across the hill is

nothing but sunshine,
liveoak, hardscrabble, hot little
lizards)

wet shade

made those huge damp trees.

At my sister's house
at the foot of the trail,

I stop

drink coffee, tell her of my walk.

II.

I know nothing
of planes: I have seen pictures
of the bomb:

It is beautiful to watch

jets skim by Richmond

and the prison, pass the
mountain, out

on a shining endless ocean

lift up on clouds and gleam

even the noise is

interesting to hear and how it

echoes across these

manzanita hills.

III.

Stop the sailing sailboats:

they are still.
 just west of Alcatraz,
 beyond them San Francisco town
 bonewhite in blue sea bay
 two major jails
 an oil refinery
 sailboats all the way.
 I eat my lunch on
 sharp rocks at the top.

IV.

to see your own tracks climbing
 up the trail that you go down.
 the ocean's edge is high
 it seems to rise and hang there
 halfway up the sky.

V.

sun goes down.
 on the dark side of the hill
 through pecker redwood trees
 in gloom and chill
 a small red blossom
 agitates the shade.
 the pipeline trail.
 weave forward
 carried on these feet
 feel of the body
 & abstract recollection held in time.
 abandoned house at road's end:
 gray and real the
 glassless square holes
 black/the steps all sidewise
 and the wise inside.
 I walk back to my cabin door
 And leave this day behind.