

# Echoes from ECCO



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Volume 2, Issue 2  
February, 2009

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Visit us on the web at [www.conferencecenter.org](http://www.conferencecenter.org)

## FREE Lodging at ECCO

Who would ever have thought of Bill Swan as a radical? But the radical side of our Executive Director has suddenly emerged in this month's Director's Desk.

He's told us "do what it takes to fill the place," so now he's giving it away to folks who haven't been to ECCO in a while (or ever). Lots of midweek dates are available, throughout 2009.

For the down-and-dirty details, take a look at Bill's Director's Desk on page 4. Then get on the phone and

make it happen! What are you waiting for?

If your group has never presented a retreat before, we can help you with that, too. Just ask for our handy retreat planning guide. We'd love to send it out to you. If this still isn't enough, pick up the phone. We'll be happy to walk you through the pertinent points.

Bottom line is, we've exhausted all your excuses for not coming to ECCO in 2009:

- Price? *Nothing's better than free!*
- Planning? *We'll help and support you every step of the way.*
- Dates? *Let us know when you want to come.*

*Don't delay. Call before March 1, 2009.*

Now's your chance to take advantage of Bill's radical idea.

Who knows if this opportunity will ever surface again.

## Retreat Planning—We Want to Help

We hear it all the time . . .

"Our group has never planned a retreat before, and we don't know what to do."

ECCO's staff **does** know what goes into planning a group getaway. It's part of our job—and our ministry—to help you achieve your goals, whether you're aiming for a spiritual retreat or an educational conference, taking advantage of our

special knowledge and relationship with Yosemite National Park and environs.

For the next few issues of *Echoes from ECCO*, we'll share with you some of the basics to help you get on the road.

Step 1 in planning any conference or retreat is to determine what you want to get out of it. It isn't enough to say "we do this every

### Step 1:

*Define the purpose of your conference or retreat and establish the goals you need to achieve that purpose.*

## Our Mission

**ECCO is a center of renewal and beauty, where education, growth, service and prayer come together for the glory of God.**

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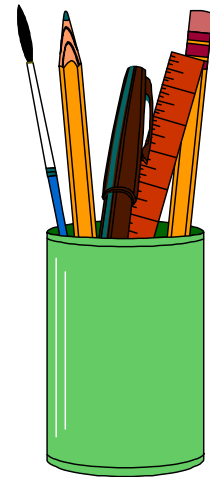
**Next month:***Establishing  
Communication  
and Contracting  
with ECCO***Retreat Planning . . .***(Continued from Page 1)*

year. You really need to think about:

- How long will it take to deliver your message?
- How many people can you accommodate? This is both a function of what you want to teach and how the teaching is organized. It is also greatly determined by the capacity of the facility with whom you contract.

Defining these elements serves as the basis for your discussions and will drive the rest of the conference's organization.

Not knowing an event's specific purpose at the outset doesn't mean you should scrap it, but it does mean you need to ask your organizing committee some questions. Even if you think you know the purpose, it's still good to review it one more time before actual planning begins.

**Tom Bopp, Yosemite Man**

Tom Bopp is a Yosemite Institution, and we were fortunate to have him play a part in our Thanksgiving Elderhostel. But you don't have to attend an Elderhostel to enjoy what Tom calls his "eclectic but by no means comprehensive [musical] melange," representing his shifting tastes in music. Or as he puts it, "a short attention span."

Tom has made his living as an entertainer since 1982, performing a wide range of piano and vocal music. In the spring of 1983, Tom signed on at the historic Wawona Hotel in Yosemite National Park for a one-week gig. That was extended to a second week, during which he was invited to stay on indefinitely. He now performs there nightly Tuesday

through Saturday during the hotel's season.

While Tom is apt to perform anything from Celtic folk music to, as he calls it, "neurotic jazz," Tom generally tries to coordinate his offerings "with the feeling of the room," but somehow usually manages to segue into popular music from the first 50 years of the 20th century. Whether he's performing cabaret songs, antique salon music, cowboy ditties, leftovers from long-ago classical piano lessons, Depression-era tunes, or ragtime, spontaneity is the thing Tom likes best.

A Yosemite historian, Tom often presents slideshows in conjunction with his Wawona shows. He's just released a new DVD, *Vintage Songs of*

*Yosemite*, featuring the Firefall, 11 historic songs, 400 rare images and films from Yosemite's past.

Tom makes his home in Fish Camp, California, with his wife, artist Diane Detrick Bopp.

His hobbies include composing (on his computer), wandering aimlessly, and delving into endless time-consuming Projects.

We look forward to being able to include Tom's music and knowledge in upcoming Elderhostel programs and invite you to take a listen when you're up Wawona-way.

Text & photo courtesy of Tom Bopp



Tom plays regularly at the Wawona and Ahwahnee Hotels in Yosemite National Park as well as at fundraisers for local organizations.

Check his [website](#) to make sure you know when and where he'll be on any given night.

# Plan now for Thanksgiving at ECCO

ECCO's 2008 Thanksgiving celebration at ECCO was a rousing success. We served 130 guests, including 16 Elderhostel participants. An amazing 19 people arrived early, on Wednesday evening, even though that wasn't offered as part of the package.

For the past two years we've managed to keep a lid on prices for this event, but in 2009 we've had to make some slight adjustments. Even so, we're able to offer some enhancements, based on 2008's successes, at a very reasonable price.

Groups of 6 or less may be partnered with others at Thanksgiving dinner. Groups of 7 or more will be assigned their own table.

Room assignments for stay-overs are done on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you have a lodge preference, get your name in the hat now. As Coopman Room in Sanford Lodge is a common meeting room available to all guests, one group may not reserve both rooms on either side of it.

Once again ECCO's Thanksgiving Celebration will be flanked on the front side by an Elderhostel and on the back side by Artists' Creative Weekend, giving guests the opportunity to schedule a full-week's stay on ECCO's tranquil grounds.

Dinners in 2009 will cost \$29.00 for adults and \$14.50 for children 4 to 11.

**Package 1:** Thanksgiving dinner, leftovers, Thursday night lodging and Friday breakfast. Prices range from \$75.00 quad occupancy to \$122.00 single occupancy.

**Package 2:** Lodging Wednesday and Thursday nights, continental breakfast Thanksgiving morning, Thanksgiving dinner, leftovers and Friday breakfast. Prices for Package 2 range from \$115.00 quad occupancy to \$212 single occupancy.



**Thanksgiving reservation deadline: November 13, 2009—or until we're full!**

## Thanksgiving at ECCO 2009—November 25-29, 2009.

### Thanksgiving Dinner Only:

Adult                    \$29.00     \_\_\_\_\_ Dinners at \$29.00 for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child, 4 to 11        \$14.50     \_\_\_\_\_ Dinners at \$14.50 for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Package 1:** Thanksgiving Dinner, leftovers, Thursday night lodging, Friday breakfast.

\_\_\_\_\_ Double occupancy, \$81.00                    \_\_\_\_\_ Single Occupancy, \$122.00  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Quad\* occupancy, \$75.00                    \_\_\_\_\_ Child, \$36.50

**Package 2:** Wednesday & Thursday nights lodging, Thanksgiving Dinner, leftovers, Friday breakfast

\_\_\_\_\_ Double occupancy, \$130.00                    \_\_\_\_\_ Single Occupancy, \$212.00  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Quad\* occupancy, \$118.00                    \_\_\_\_\_ Child, \$57.00

All prices are per-person. \*Quad occupancy is 3 or 4 persons to a room.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Paid by: Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_ (complete below)

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code where card is billed: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to secure your place, you must remit a minimum of 50% of the amount due, with the balance due no later than Friday, November 13, which is the reservation deadline.

# The 4th Green: ECCO's New Recreation Area

By Kristen Cook



Bill Swan checks out the 11th station of the Self-Interpretive Nature Trail



The grass volleyball court



Half-court basketball is available on the 4th Green complex



Rose hips adorn a section of the Self-Interpretive Nature Trail

**Views change with the seasons along the Nature Trail**

Tucked away behind a small layer of Ponderosa Pines, Incense Cedars and Manzanitas is ECCO's newly-created, state-of-the-art recreation and sports area. We've lovingly named it the 4th Green as historically it was the 4th green of the Sky Ranch Golf Course.

Out of sight and ear shot of the core of the conference center—but only a short walk away, the 4th Green offers a basketball court, grass volleyball field, soccer field, horseshoes, a self-interpretive nature trail and a team building course.

Sports equipment and nature trail interpretive pamphlets can be checked out from the office.

### Challenge Course

The team-building (challenge) course is an excellent tool for many types of retreats, for children, men and women.

It's a fun, ECCO-facilitated outdoor activity which helps groups maintain healthy communication and develop teamwork skills. Sessions are tailored to the needs and abilities of the group. An ideal session includes 10-20 participants for an hour long session.

While the balance of the 4th Green is freely available to ECCO guests, a nominal fee is charged for use of the challenge course, and a reservation must be made prior to your arrival, since the session must be facilitated by a trained ECCO employee.

### Self-Interpretive Nature Trail

ECCO's self-interpretive nature trail is a mostly level, half-mile escape from all things bustling. It's a great way to escape into your own private space for a few minutes . . . or a few hours, whatever you have available.

The single track trail travels 11 informative posts through peculiar "weeds", edible plants, foggy meadows, ancient oaks and a lively pond. In the future more posts are planned, to incorporate additional features of this area which is becoming a teaching tool for our natural history and outdoor education classes.

Chances are you may have the opportunity to meet some of our resident creatures as you explore its path.

Truly there is so much to learn and experience in God's amazing handiwork!

### Did you know?

. . . That we have a Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) right on ECCO's grounds?

It's not in the 4th Green area, but it's very visible. Get out those tree keys and see if you can tell the difference between our Giant Sequoia and its Incense Cedar-cousin right near by.



Can you tell which is the Giant Sequoia and which is the Incense Cedar?



Below: Leaf from a Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*)



## Dougie's Dugout

by Douglas Fur II

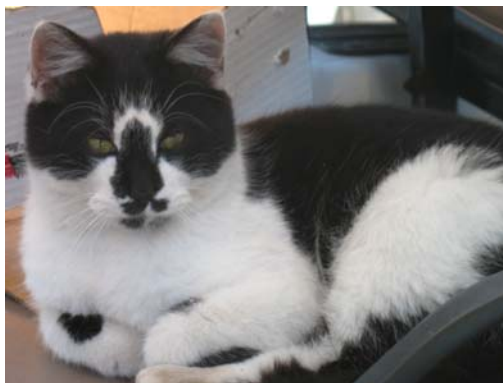
My dear friends,

As you can see from my photo at right, things have been a bit soggy up here. I'm so pleased to tell you that the pond is looking beautiful—and full. I know you'll like that. It's not so comfortable for me to get my fur wet, but you know I will put up with any discomfort and inconvenience to help ECCO and my guests out.

This month I am really excited that our boss, Bill Swan, wants to open ECCO up to more and more people. He says his offer is especially designed for folks who've never been to ECCO. He wants you to take advantage of his gift of FREE lodging. Can you believe that? I can't! When was the last time *you* got something for FREE? All you have to do is call my friend, Melva, at 559/683-8162, and ask her about this. You can also email her at [ecco@sti.net](mailto:ecco@sti.net). She loves email, so if you can contact her that way, that would be great. She tells me she has lots of midweek dates available throughout the year, and she really wants to help you. You have to call by March 1, though.

But . . . I also have a confession to make. I sort of have a new job which is taking up a lot of my time. I know this is a shock to my many friends who believe that I have all I can handle taking care of ECCO. You need to know, though, that my ministry extends beyond ECCO to all who need me. I now visit a great deal with some friends up in the Grove, and they've come to depend on me. I do check in at ECCO from time to time, though. It's just not as likely that you'll see me when you visit.

Here's a surprise for all of you. I have hired a new staff member, Pancho, who may take over writing my column from time to time since my schedule has become so full. She and my other staff member, Angel, are very dedicated to serving our guests and will carry on my tradition in fine style. I am teaching her everything I know about *Echoes from ECCO* as well as all the other things I am in charge of here.



Pancho, my new employee



And, of course, I will still be around to supervise as well.

Things have been jumping around here as our CalFire classes are in full swing. I love these people! During the winter they come up here to study really hard (and to see me) and then when the fire season starts, they're all business as they save homes and lives. I can't tell you how impressed I was when I read articles about all the animals they helped save during the devastating fires of 2008.

We welcomed lots of other groups during January also. Our clergy friends were here, followed by the Vessels of Honor Women and Life Tabernacle. The kids from St. Andrews United Methodist Church came in on January 17 and shared the facility with our old friends from ACME. The last weekend in January saw Job's Daughters, who are one of our longest-standing groups, here with the women of All Saints Anglican Church in Bakersfield. It's been a terrific month for all of us.

If any of you want to send stories and pictures of your time at ECCO, I'd love to feature them in my column. All you have to do is [email](#) them to me. As you all know, I love to hear from you.

Oh, that reminds me. I need to welcome Chuck Kendall to the ECCO Commission. Welcome back also to my old friends, John Cavanagh and Larry Wilds. I know you weren't able to attend the January Commission meeting, but I am looking forward to seeing you all next time around. Just hunt me up and I'll give you the scoop on what's *really* been happening at ECCO during your absence.

All my love,

Douglas Fur II



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**WE'RE ON THE WEB!**

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[WWW.CONFERENCECENTER.ORG](http://WWW.CONFERENCECENTER.ORG)

***Let our Ministry help  
your Ministry.***

Photos by Judi Hussain unless  
otherwise noted.

## The Director's Desk

By Bill Swan

# Free Lodging for your Retreat!

This month I want to  
share an idea with you.

How'd you like to get some-  
thing for FREE?

We all know that nothing in  
life is free—that is, unless  
you want to come to ECCO.  
We want to invest in you,  
and we're willing to take the  
first step. If you need a  
place for your retreat and  
you've never explored ECCO  
before, here's your chance.  
Your lodging will be FREE.  
Gratis. No charge.

What's the catch? One, you  
need to call and talk with  
Melva (559-683-8162), our  
Director of Guest Services,  
*in the month of February.*

Two, the FREE lodging offer  
for your group applies *any  
Sunday through Thursday  
when we have availability.*  
That's it! (Just so you know,  
right now we have midweek  
dates in every remaining  
month of 2009, except July.)

Why are we doing this? It's  
really very simple. *Let our  
Ministry help your Minis-  
try.*

Take us up on this amazing  
offer. It's our chance to show  
you who we are and what we  
can do for you.

Who knows? This may never  
happen again!

If you've never organized a  
retreat before, we've got you  
covered there, too. Let us  
send you our FREE retreat-  
planning guide. Ask us for a  
copy, and we'll mail one out  
to you. Even better, if you  
still have questions after  
you've had a chance to read  
it, we'll be glad to consult  
with you to answer any  
questions that remain.

We're here for you. What are  
you waiting for?

Onward and upward,  
Bill Swan



Bill Swan, ECCO's  
Executive Director  
Photo by Donna Lalev

