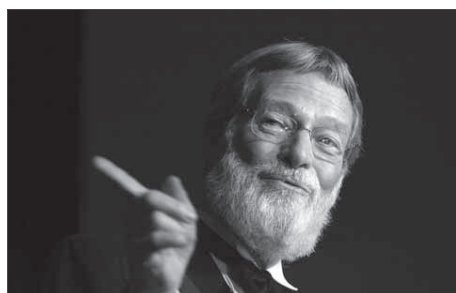
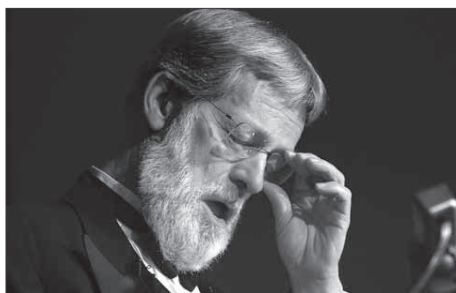




Ron Evans presented a dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol* to a packed house on Saturday at Pilgrim Place. Mr. Evans portrayed each character in the play through change in voice and facial expression, to reflect each new persona in the well-loved story of redemption and the spirit of Christmas.



COURIER photos/Steven Felschundeff

## One man plays many characters in holiday classic

**W**ith 37 different film interpretations and countless other reenactments, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has become a holiday standard in homes across the globe.

Likewise, it is a seasonal staple at Claremont's Pilgrim Place, where resident Ron Evans presented his own version of Dickens' famous tale Saturday evening in a unique one-man show.

Hundreds crowded inside Decker Hall to delight in Mr. Evans' solo performance, acting out all 28 voices of Dickens' narrative. Mr. Evans' whimsical weekend performance continued on in the tradition of Dickens himself, who used to hold his own readings of the Christmas ghost story.

"It's a story that everyone knows and adores," Mr. Evans said. "It is a wonderful reminder of the spirit of Christmas."

No extensive cast or fancy props were needed. It was just Mr. Evans, adorned in the timeless top hat and cloak, performing a distinct expression for each character, from the Christmas curmudgeon Ebenezer Scrooge to the jovial ghost of Christmas present and the tale's young hero Tiny Tim. His reenactment of the tolling bells and clanking of Jacob Marley's metal chains were among performance highlights, receiv-

ing responses of laughter from the captivated audience.

"Ron's performance is just an embodiment of all the feelings of Christmas," said Pilgrim Place resident Sue Gallagher. "It makes you appreciate life and the warmth of the season."

"It's a poignant sharing of a family classic," added Genie Holmes, also a Pilgrim in attendee at the Saturday night festivities.

Despite having no particular dramatic training, Mr. Evans has always seemed to have a flair for the theatrical, according to fellow Pilgrim Place residents.

"His voice tells a story in itself, even when you ask him the time of day," laughed Ms. Holmes.

As a clergyman being a skilled storyteller was a part of the job, explained Mr. Evans.

"I talked for a living," Mr. Evans said. "When reciting stories of great literature, like the Bible, the way you interpret and present the readings is a product of storytelling."

In addition to giving sermons, Mr. Evans has enjoyed writing and reciting a variety of stories to eager listeners. *A Christmas Carol* is just one of many stories in his repertoire.

"The way you interpret is part of the fun," Mr. Evans said. "A story can take on a whole different meaning just by adding a little drama."

The difficulty was not in creating 28 distinct char-

acter voices, or memorizing the script, he claims. In fact, he says that part is easy. The true challenge is telling the story without hindering the audience's own interpretation.

"It is about presenting the story without getting in the way of the imagination," he said.

The desire to share the joys of the spirit of the season has kept Mr. Evans telling the tale after retiring and moving to Pilgrim Place 4 years ago. Of all 28 voices that Mr. Evans conjures up for his yearly performance, it is that of the newly-reformed Mr. Scrooge, at the end of the story, a man with the same joy of the Christmas season, that remains his favorite year after year. The spirit is contagious.

"Scrooge's joy [at the end of the story] makes you joyous," Ms. Holmes said.

Mr. Evans will dive into his next theatrical adventure with a performance of **Our Town** through the Pilgrim Place's Reader's Theatre. The production will take place February 25. He looks forward as always to keeping the spirit of Dickens' story alive for Christmases and generations to come.

"The old fashioned custom of reading aloud is particularly powerful. It is a wonderful way to bring out the kid in all of us," Mr. Evans said, who added with a laugh, "Why should kids have all the fun?"

—Beth Hartnett

