## Leonard Huffstetler notes 95th birthday

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER Staff Writer

After 95 years Leonard Huffstetler is still laughing. The Kings Mountain man celebrated his birthday last

"I've got a lot of pain. Through it all I'm happy," he said.

Jean Peterson, who says Mr. Huffstetler is the father she never had, agrees that the man doesn't let age or knee and hip replacement stop him.

"He's always happy." Mr. Huffstetler is probably best known for reviving Penley's Chapel Church located on N.C. 216. He was teaching a men's Sunday school class at Grace United Methodist when the denomination's district superintendent noticed the class had grown from 20 to 50 members in five years. The man was so impressed, he asked Mr. Huffstetler to start a church in the building which was slated for sale.

That was 1955. Since then the church has grown from 18 on that first Sunday to averaging 50 at its services.

"We started with nothing," he said.

Mr. Huffstetler credits his wife Cornelia, now deceased, for helping start the church with proceeds from bake sales.

"That woman, she baked pies that were out of this world," Peterson said.

Mr. Huffstetler stepped down from the pulpit in 1995, just two months short of the forty year mark. He never accepted payment for preaching; instead he worked at Ferguson Glass Company. Cornelia's job was in textiles. Today he teaches a men's class at Penley's.

"He's a man of God. He loves people. He loves the Lord," said Rev. Doug Allen, the current pastor. "When we get together, we have to schedule a couple hours because we get to talking about the Lord and we don't know when to hush."

Faced with sharing a minister with another church, Penley's Chapel bought the building from the United Methodist to become an interdenominational church nine years ago, just prior to Mr. Huffstetler's retirement.

Since becoming a Christian in 1946, he says faith and the Bible have been central.

"That's about all I studied, that's about all that's been on my mind," he said.

Mr. Huffstetler is quick to say he has no official ministerial credentials. Forced to quit elementary school to work at Dilling Mill, he never completed his formal education.

"I was 13 when my daddy put me to work. Back then there was no child labor law," he said.

The youngster was paid 15 cents an hour. His dad made \$1 a day. Only once were his parents able to afford Christmas presents

for Mr. Huffstetler. "The only thing we knew was a piece of cake, piece of pie on Christmas," he said.

Mr. Huffstetler remembers when the mill put water pipes through the floors of all the homes. A spigot controlled the flow of the cold water. Later toilets were installed on back porches,

replacing outdoor privies. At age 18, Mr. Huffstetler married and left home. The wedding took place on Feb. 2, Groundhog's Day. Two years later the couple's only child Boyce was born. They called him their little groundhog.

Soon after his son was born, Mr. Huffstetler had to



LEONARD HUFFSTETLER

leave his young family for the Army. World War II was raging. He spent 30 months in North Africa and Europe.

Today he keeps a world map spread on the living room coffee table. This helps him keep up with his greatgranddaughter Clara Huffstetler who is in the Navy. Once she sailed through the same Straits of Gibraltar that Mr. Huffstetler did on his way to North Africa a half century

In addition to Clara, he has five other great-grandchildren and three grandsons. One is a Navy chap-



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Leonard Huffstetler, retired pastor of Penley's Chapel, recently turned 95 years old.



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