

Author recalls Chelmsford life as 'Small Town Kid'

By RICHARD P. COOK
Sun Staff

WESTFORD — No one enjoys center stage more than 77-year-old George Adams Parkhurst. At one time or another, he has been a playwright, actor, genealogist, newspaper columnist and author.

He has just published *Small Town Kid*, a first-person account of his life between the ages of 4½ and 27½ (from the end of World War I to the beginning of World War II).

A Chelmsford resident most of his life, George and his wife, the former Barbara Hildreth, now live in a Hildreth Hills condominium overlooking the Westford countryside.

The couple also has a summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, where, he says, they are known as "the other George and Barbara." Parkhurst's ancestors settled in the Chelmsford area in the 1630s.

Small Town Kid tells of the changes in Chelmsford over a 23-year period.

"I enjoy sharing my knowledge with others. People sometimes get more out of trivial history than they do from formal history books."

The 190-page book tells of Chelmsford during the 1920s and '30s, a time when many people had backyard gardens and depended on a flock of chickens for eggs.

Radio was in its infancy; there was no television. Main roads had gravel surfaces that had to be oiled each spring. The auto was only beginning to supercede the horse and buggy. There were no supermarkets or shopping malls.

"Society's pendulum keeps swinging back and forth," Parkhurst said. "I think many people would like to see some of the old values return. Life has become too impersonal. Even at community events such as the Fourth of July festival, former participants have become spectators."

Parkhurst is a wealth of knowledge. What he can't find in his head is packed on neatly organized shelves in his study, including clippings from newspapers and books dating back 200 years. In addition, he has a collection of memorabilia many museums would envy.

He is perhaps best known as a founder of the Unitarian Play-



SUN/RICHARD HUNT

George Adams Parkhurst with "Small Town Kid" book which depicts life in Chelmsford between 1918 and 1941.

ers, a theater group that began 1934. It soon became the Chelmsford Players and now is known as the Camelot Players.

He said *Small Town Kid* is

available at Paperback Booksmith, Chelmsford Mall and Chelmsford Gift Shop in Central Square. It costs \$15.95 in hard cover. Call 692-6142 for an autographed copy.

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