

Craig Lewis -N-



Craig Lewis with daughters Kati and Jenny and grandson Lucas in forefront.



SHEPHERD'S CROOK

Craig Lewis has taken a non-traditional route to becoming a Golf Course Superintendent, yet it has led him to where he is today, Shepherd's Crook Golf Club in Zion, Illinois, literally across the street from Wisconsin. Craig got his first job on a golf course by riding his bike to nearby Foss Park every day for three weeks until the superintendent finally gave him a job. He installed drainage all summer by himself. After that it was a few stops in the corporate world and an Assistant position at Midlane Country Club that paved the way for his current position.



The 18th, "Devils Ditch" at Shepherd's Crook ends on the double false-fronted green.

Shepherd's Crook, sitting on 140 acres of former farmland (not landfill) is a great little treasure where Craig has applied his personal touch since the grow-in phase when he started as Superintendent in 1998. Architect Keith Foster, Wadsworth Construction, and Craig built 18 holes that quickly resembled classic designs with grass-faced bunkers and non-maintained fescue roughs. In fact, in order for the shapers on the construction crew to get a feel for just what he wanted, architect Keith Foster took his crew to nearby Shoreacres to get a look at the bunkers that Seth Raynor had built over 80 years before. The amazing part of all this is that it was done by moving only 100,000 square yards of soil.

Since then it has been Craig and his crew of seven (even his mechanic was mowing greens the day I visited) taking care of the course. With a limited crew and the high standards that he has set, it is attention to detail that

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has resulted in a course that is currently ranked in the top 100 courses in America for women. This is made possible by the placement of forward tees that allow women to hit an 8 or 9-iron into a green just like the men do. If you think that makes for an easy golf course though forget it. Between the large rolling greens and the 650 yard par 5 (longest in the state and probably the farthest north) this course can grow some teeth and bite you quick.

If you get a chance to speak with Craig you quickly recognize a person who takes great pride in his course and isn't afraid of a bit of work in order to make the course special. One indicator of this is the fact that there is zero percent Poa annua on the greens, because he mechanically removes it. It is also expressed in the bridge made out of Red Oak. The trees were cleared during construction; Craig then had the wood cut into boards for planks; the trunks of the trees serve as the supports.

If all of this isn't enough to keep a man busy, Craig spends all of his "free time" with his two daughters and one grandson (another is on the way), fishing in his back yard, and working weekends at the local cancer hospital driving patients between the hospital, hotels, and the airport.

So come June everyone should take the time to make it north to Shepherd's Crook and enjoy all the hard work that Craig and his crew have put in to make the day fun.



Our always affable host, Craig Lewis, Superintendent of Shepherd's Crook.

Below: A vantage point atop the fescue roughs provide an outlook over the ninth and eighteenth greens at Shepherd's Crook.

