OUR meeting and tournament on June 20 will be held at Castlewood Country Club in Pleasanton. Castlewood, with 810 members, is a 36-hole course, 18 of which are on the hill, 18 in the valley.

We will be playing the hill course -- the older of the two, having been built in 1921. The course was built on land previously owned by William Randolph Hearst, the publishing mogul. It was designed by the late William Bell who designed many of the courses in the area.

Our host superintendent is Blake Swint. Blake grew up in San Lorenzo, although he was born in Georgia. At 12 he got the golfing bug, and worked a deal with the manager at Sky West Golf Course to pick up trash around the clubhouse in exchange for free golf. After two years of dedication, he was hired on the crew for summer and weekend help. He became the night waterman at 16 and hired on full time after high school graduation.

Blake knew his calling in life at a very early age and never veered off course. He was at Sky West a total of 14 years, but always felt he could stay away any longer. He accepted the superintendent position at Sequoyah CC and was there for seven years before moving on to Castlewood in 1991.

Since taking this position he has been very busy. All the original greens were constructed from clay. He first rebuilt seven of the greens on the hill course with washed sod -- the first superintendent in Northern California to try it. Blake uses only solubles and organics to fertilize. Then came the second project, to rebuild the practice area with new target greens and tee areas. That project was finally completed last fall.

A night waterman does the irrigation, since 60% of the hill course is still quick couplers and galvanized pipe. Blake is looking forward to his next project. He hopes to complete that in the next year and a half. Blake's daughter Becky, 10, loves to ride around the course with dad and help out. (Might we have a future superintendent here?) In addition to Becky, Blake and his wife, Debbie, have two other children, Lindsay, 5, and Corey, 3.

Between his job and his family, Blake religiously follows Winston Cup Motor Racing and attends night school majoring in horticulture. He also has recently enrolled in the GCSAA certification program. Needless to say, he doesn't spend as much time playing golf as he would like.

Blake has been a member of both the Northern California and the National superintendent's associations for ten years. He supports the association 100% because it's "the greatest way to learn new skills and ideas." That fits his philosophy about this business: Try to provide the