

daily visitors, Mr. Verity has long been accustomed to strangers watching him at work and, often enough, volunteering encouragement and advice. Pedestrians passing the unfinished Americas Tower are often brought to a halt by glimpsing through its big windows half a dozen workers busily engaged in breaking up small stones and fitting them into place on odd-shaped sheets of paper, which can be seen to bear smudgy black-and-white markings of an indecipherable nature.

Having been brought to just such a bemused halt ourself and having spotted Mr. Verity among the workers, we stepped inside and paid a professional call on him. Except for a pair of sporty green suspenders, he was looking more ragamuffinlike than ever, and his spiky hair appeared to be carrying more than its usual cargo of stone dust and other occupational debris. He led us on a quick tour of the intricate maze of tesserae-filled trays, explaining that he had sought to provide himself with an exceptionally diverse palette of colors for "The Gorgeous Mosaic." "I've taken the adjective 'gorgeous' to heart," he said. "We've some forty or fifty species of stones here—marble, onyx, limestone, slate, granite, travertine—from twenty or thirty different countries, including Brazil, Greece, Italy, and France. We've red lava from New

Mexico, and even some samples of Manhattan schist, excavated from practically under our feet. As for the glass tesserae, most of them come from Murano, outside Venice, but we're willing to make use of any stone or glass that happens to cross our path. Broken statuary, discarded balusters, curbstones. One of the brand-new glass doors in this very building got smashed in the course of construction, so we swept up the pieces, tossed them into our tumbling machine to smooth off the edges, and will be putting them to excellent use in the mosaic."

Following his custom at St. John the Divine, Mr. Verity has recruited for the making of "The Gorgeous Mosaic" a mosaic of young assistants, diverse in race, education, artistic background, and surname: Theresa Robb, Kirsten Westphal, David St. John-James, Ernesto Gomez, Deborah Ehrlich, Kathryn Clark, Javaka Steptoe, Cynthia Lathrop, and Kyung-Lim Lee. Also on hand is Mr. Verity's son Tom, who is nineteen and whose mode of dress is almost as eccentric as his father's. (We noticed that the shoelaces of Tom's heavy boots were made of shiny copper wire.) Tom is on leave from his regular occupation, which is supplying dressed oak beams and other heavy timber for restoration projects in the British Isles. The tens of thou-

sands of tesserae that Tom and his companions have cut, chipped, and split are anchored face down upon the design sheets with a wheat paste similar to that commonly used to put up wallpaper. Once all the sheets are completed, they are embedded in mortar with their paper-covered side up and their never-henceforth-to-be-seen back side down; when the mortar has hardened, the sheets are wetted and peeled off.

By the time Americas Tower opens and the great, many-colored diamond hangs on the lobby wall, spring will have arrived and Mr. Verity will be back at work on the west front of the cathedral. He says that he will be sorry to abandon his improvised atelier on Sixth Avenue. "The crowds peering in at us as we work—we've found that their interest somehow leaches in through the glass and gives us energy," he says. "Mosaic-making is hard work. We finish only about three square feet of surface a day. It's one of the oldest forms of art—many thousands of years old. The hammers and other tools we use have a prehistoric look, and no wonder." He pointed to a couple of flat-topped willow stumps, from whose rough bark tender shoots were defiantly emerging. "We drive a steel blade called a hardy into the top of a stump, place a stone on the hardy, strike it just so with a hammer, and the stone responds by splitting. The stump serves to absorb some of the shock of the blow and makes our task less tiring. A few months ago, those willows were growing by a stream up in Connecticut. Centuries ago, mosaic-makers in Rome would have chopped down willows to make the same use of them that we do." Mr. Verity snapped his green suspenders. "What a welcome lack of progress one enjoys in the arts!" he said. "It gives one hope."

Merchandise

WHENEVER we get fed up with winter weather, we like to fly down to Orlando, eat so-called Mexican and so-called Chinese food in the vicinity of Walt Disney World, wander among the booths of manufacturers of golf-related equipment and providers, and play a few rounds of golf. At least, that's what we did a few weeks ago, when the Professional Golfers' Association of America was hold-



"I'm afraid my youthful transgressions may already have eliminated any chance for me to be President."

ing its annual Merchandise Show at the Orange County Convention/Civic Center. Merchandise interests us, and golf merchandise interests us deeply.

One thing that interests us almost as much as golf merchandise is hat hair. Hat hair occurs when you play golf in a hat for several hours and then take off the hat. Hat hair is the result of perspiration and hat-related pressure, and it consists of roughly equal parts of flatness, dampness, messiness, and sticking-outness. What made us think of hat hair at the Merchandise Show was Greg Norman, the world-famous Australian golfer. Norman was signing autographs for a large group of admirers, and the top

part of his hair was clinging tightly to his head, while the bottom part was sticking out. That was odd, because as far as we could tell he had not recently been playing golf or wearing a hat. After thinking for quite a while, we realized that Norman must have had his hair cut to resemble hat hair, making his hair style look the same whether he has been playing golf or not—a very practical decision for someone in his line of work.

The thing we probably saw the most of at the Merchandise Show was great big golf clubs. A couple of years ago, a company came out with a driver that had an oversized head. It was designed to be more forgiving of bad swings than ordinary drivers are, in something of the same way that oversized tennis racquets are more forgiving of bad swings than old-fashioned tennis racquets are. Since then, many other manufacturers have come out with big-headed drivers, too. Virtually all these new drivers also have big names. At the show, we saw jumbo drivers called Launcher, Whale, Wide Body, Fat Eddie, Big Bertha, Big Z, Big Ben, Big Head, Mr. Big, Top Dawg, and The Judge. We also saw a driver



called The Hammer. It didn't have a big head, but it was meant to be forgiving anyway, on account of its internal "hammerpiece," patent pending.

Our three favorite booths at the Merchandise Show were the Kasco Corp. of America booth, the Hi-Tech Golf booth, and the Wilson booth. At all these booths, people were giving away free golf balls. When we walked into the Wilson booth, a woman handed us two brand-new golf balls. When we walked out, another woman handed us two more. Every fifteen minutes or so, we would go back. Pretty soon, we had so many free golf balls in our pockets that the only thing for us to do was go play golf.

One of the most surprising things about Walt Disney World, in our opinion, is that its almost unbelievably vast facilities include several of the best golf courses in the country. Shortly before our visit, two brand-new Disney golf courses had been added, bringing the total to six. One of these courses, called Osprey Ridge, was designed by Tom Fazio, who is a very famous golf-course architect. The other, called Eagle Pines, was designed by Pete Dye, who may be even more famous. We played Osprey

Ridge twice and Eagle Pines once.

The first time we played Osprey Ridge, the course starter grouped us with three young radiologists. One of the radiologists had a beeper in his pocket, and he stopped several times during the round to talk to patients on a cellular phone that he kept beside him on the seat of his golf cart. He would say, "Just a minute. I have to check my file." Then he would put the phone on hold and hit his ball. The second time we played Osprey Ridge, the starter grouped us with three men who had come to Orlando to attend a pharmaceutical convention. One of these men was from Puerto Rico. As his putts were rolling toward the hole, he did not say, "Go in!" the way many native English speakers do; instead, he said, "Enter!" Another of the pharmaceutical guys also spoke to his ball a lot, referring to it as "Darling." When we played Eagle Pines, the starter grouped us with three assistant golf professionals from a small golf course somewhere in Kentucky. Like us, the assistant professionals had sneaked out of the Merchandise Show. And, like us, they were in no particular hurry to go back.