



## Five Little Girls and a Mongrel Disillusion 'Old' Pete—(He's 21)

By PETER DESBARATS

Children have a natural bent for destroying things — furniture, teaching careers — and each other.

But their demolition reaches new heights every time they tear down some grown-up's illusions about them. Few adults understand children the way children understand them.

"I can handle kids," are famous last words.

The sage realizes the only kind of handling children understand is manhandling, but sages are outnumbered in this world. Most of us are hard-boiled on the surface and soft as putty underneath.

Yesterday after lunch I regarded Janet with curiosity. My seven-year-old sister was as cute as a button and as inscrutable.

"I must get to know her better," I thought to myself. "Rushing around in a journalistic whirl, I'm losing the basic realities of life. Wisdom comes out of the mouths of babes.

"We adults often forget how much we can learn from children — untarnished by the world, generous and happy with the simple things of life."

Remembering carefree outdoor rambles of my own boyhood, I turned to Janet and said: "Let's you and I go for a walk on Mount Royal this afternoon."

"No," said Janet. "Going to watch television."

I bribed her with a chocolate bar. As I put on my coat I pictured the next few hours. I, old and jaded, renewing my youth as Janet ran hither and thither, squealing with delight as she found an acorn or running to me with red maple leaves clutched like treasures in her hands.

"Can Susan come too?"

Reluctantly I consented, knotting a silk scarf about my neck and putting my head, literally, into the noose.

Again the front door opened. "Can Allison come?"

The news was travelling fast. "Can Jo-Ann come?"

I dashed about the house picking up a last few things. "Can Linda come?"

Little girls were still pouring out of houses as we drove down the street. I had five with me, and a black mongrel dog who, its owner confided, always got sick in cars.

We didn't stroll over Mount Royal, we assaulted it.

Kids travel fast and light, and authorities should allow cars on the mountain so adults can keep up with them.

Allison pointed to the huge television mast at the top of the mountain, "Let's go up there."

"Don't you think that's rather far?" I asked. "Really, your little legs..."

### Cross-Country Run

Trusting little hands slipped into mine, almost wrenched my arms from their sockets and away we went. Now and then we hit a path, but for the most part it was cross-country, broken-field running.

Jo-Ann discovered some stairs running up the side of a hill—107 to be exact. Oddly enough, there were only 106 running down.

Then 108 stairs, running up again.

"How about some lovely hot chocolate?" I suggested when we reached the Chalet.

The final menu consisted of chocolate bars, potato chips, soda pop and gum.

When he'd exhausted our supply, the black mongrel visited all the other tables and howled miserably for food.

On the way home we hit the stairs again. One little girl counted out loud as we stepped on each one, but unfortunately she fell down the last dozen and we never did find out how many there were.

Racing for home and sanity in the car again, we had a contest to see who could best imitate an ambulance's siren.

The mongrel won.