



# Saigon Kids: An American Military Brat Comes of Age in 1960's Vietnam

*Les Arbuckle*

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**Saigon Kids: An American Military Brat Comes of Age in 1960's Vietnam** Les Arbuckle  
#1 Amazon New Release! ? Looking for unusual coming of age books? Follow the coming of age adventures of a U.S. military brat during the early Vietnam war years in Saigon.

**The early Vietnam war years through the eyes of a U.S. military brat:** In May of 1962, Naval Chief Petty Officer Bryant Arbuckle flew to Saigon to establish a new Armed Forces radio station. Next to follow were his wife and three boys, Leslie among them. *Saigon Kids* is the candid, recondite slice of fourteen-year-old military brat Les Arbuckle's experience at the American Community School (ACS) during the critical months of the Vietnam War when events would, quite literally, ignite in downtown Saigon. In 1963, Saigon was beautiful, violent, and dirty—and the most exciting place a fourteen-year-old American boy could live. Saigon offered a rich array of activities, and much to the consternation of their parents and teachers, Les and his fellow military brats explored the dangers with reckless abandon running from machine gun fire, watching a Buddhist monk burn to death, visiting brothels late at night or, trading currency on the black market.

**Coming of age in the streets of Vietnam War torn Saigon:** When Les first arrives in Vietnam, he is a stranger in a strange land, expecting boredom in a country he doesn't know. But the American social scene is more vibrant than he expected. The American Community School is a blend of kids from all over the globe who arrived in Saigon as the fuse on Saigon was about to ignite. As the ACS students continue their American lifestyle behind barbed wire, Saigon unravels in chaos and destruction. In spite of this ugliness—an ever-present feature of everyday life—Les tells his story of teenage angst with humor and precocity.

**Coming of age tale with a twist:** The events leading up to the Vietnam War provide an unusual backdrop for this coming-of-age tale with a twist. *Saigon Kids* will also make a perfect companion to the documentary film (sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts) currently in production. The film chronicles the lives of "military brats" living in Saigon in the volatile years from 1958 to 1964.

## Saigon Kids: An American Military Brat Comes of Age in 1960's Vietnam Details

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## **From Reader Review Saigon Kids: An American Military Brat Comes of Age in 1960's Vietnam for online ebook**

**Charles W Black says**

**Started off interesting but toward the end it got very repetitive.**

This author was very lucky with all the adult stuff he was into at such an early age. He definitely had some very influential friends that led him down a dangerous and risky path.

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**Maile Doyle says**

I loved reading this book. Les Arbuckle and I were in Vietnam at the same time. I was in my second year in country and in the 10th grade while he was in his first year in country and in the 7th grade. We did not know each other. He describes so very well the sights, sounds and smells of Saigon, evoking so many memories of that beautiful city and time. His experiences are somewhat similar to mine, but also very different. The freedom we kids experienced was due to cheap and available transportation and parents on the party or diplomatic circuit and our money went very far. That we had in common. He was much more of a risk taker than I, described very well in the book. I highly recommend this book. We did live a unique life in 1960s Vietnam, a part of my life I will never forget!

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**William B. says**

**Smokers, Drinkers, Cancer**

This family was heading for short lives from the beginning. Their life style dictated that. Of course such were the time. However, Saigon was fun if dangerous, and the kids were wild.

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**Bill Seaby says**

**Great read, authentic and compelling!**

This really captures the feeling of the early '60s for a young teenager and placing life in exotic Saigon makes it even more fascinating. My 5 star recommendation for this book is without reservation.

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**Steve Ryan says**

**Terrific read!**

I've read a lot of history, especially military history. I've been very interested in the number of Viet Nam

books that have been written in the last several years, particularly those written by veterans now sharing their unique experiences with us. Lee Arbuckle shares his experience as a teenager in a military family that has been assigned to Saigon in the early 1960s. Highly recommended - and thank you Lee for sharing your unique experiences.

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### **Maureen Pierre says**

Adventurous, funny, scary, exciting, remarkable, gutsy! What would a young, restless American male coming of age in Saigon just as the Vietnam War escalates, see and do as Everything Changes? Well, as much as he can get away with. This is when a boy could run free in the streets of Saigon, be as wild as he could get away with, and live to tell it.

Exceptionally well written, he puts you right there as he is trapped in the midst of the action of the Palace military coup. One day he's on the way to meet friends to see a movie and watches the theater blow up before his eyes. He repeatedly visits in the red light district, losing his virginity along the way. And this is just skimming the surface of his adventures!

Mr. Arbuckle and his family escaped and Les returned to America forever changed and educated about the stuff of many a kid's fantasies. Beautifully written and felt, this is a memoir that will stay with you and run with your emotions in the most fascinating ways. WHAT A STORY!!!!

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### **Kay H. Kern says**

#### **So relatable to this Army Brat**

As an Army Brat born in 1951 the author so eloquently captured most of our experiences, thoughts and feelings growing up.

As he said "Like my fellow Brats, my childhood was one of privilege and pain, entitlement and anguish, as magical, complex and spellbinding as a fairy-tale one moment, then in the next, as demoralizing, puzzling and contradictory as the conflicts, environments, and cultures of the places I learned to call home." So true of this Brat who grew up during the Cuban Missile Crisis and lived in Germany during the height of the Cold War.

Thank you Les.

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### **randy casebier says**

#### **Also Third Culture Kid**

Having also grown up in Vietnam I find this book fascinating. I enjoyed the historical and political background intertwined within the story. My family, not at all rich, attended the Circle Sportif. I am saddened by some of the adult experiences shared but realize that they were part of the experience and truth. I do think the telling explains the difference between love making and sex that I have not seen expressed in such a thoughtful manner. The last chapter is useful in explaining the forever searching for "home" which is never satisfied as a third culture kid. Friendships made as a person straddling cultures are even more binding

than those made as if we had never left the USA.

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### **Kathy Dobronyi says**

Les did not do his homework, and many of the historical dates and locations he put in his book are incorrect. Les certainly bragged about being an ugly American in Saigon. This coming-of-age book had more to do with breaking laws and acting foolish than learning how to be an honorable man.

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### **George says**

#### **Really great memories**

I was in Saigon as a dependent during the summer of 1963. I have to say, although it was only 3 months it was one of the best times of my life. This book brought it all back. I hated to go back to Military School. I remember Les' father, as a friend and I spent many afternoons and evenings at the Armed Forces radio station.

You have an awesome memory, Les!

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### **Sarah says**

A great job of describing a teenagers coming of age in a country no one had heard of until...

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### **Sandra Mustain says**

#### **Military Brats!**

I was a military brat it brought back memories! As he writes it was hard to go to new places especially if their was not anymore military brats!

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### **Harrison Shaffer says**

I just finished reading Les Arbuckle's book "Saigon Kids" and I found it to be very well written and a faithful representation of what life for many of us "Brats" was during one of the most pivotal periods in 20th century history. The true test of a book like this is staying power, and I am confident that for years to come I will chuckle or tear up or get goosebumps remembering one of the sad or tragic or unbelievably crazy episodes Les recounts so well. The author is to be congratulated for the hard work of collecting his memories from 50-plus years ago and presenting an entertaining experience for readers of all ages.

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