

# Unwed teen mom finds her voice

Unwed pregnant teenager in the 1960s. All while being a World War II orphan. These are the adversities detailed in AWONer Dr. Sharon Estill Taylor's new memoir, *Phantom Son: A Mother's Story of Surrender*.

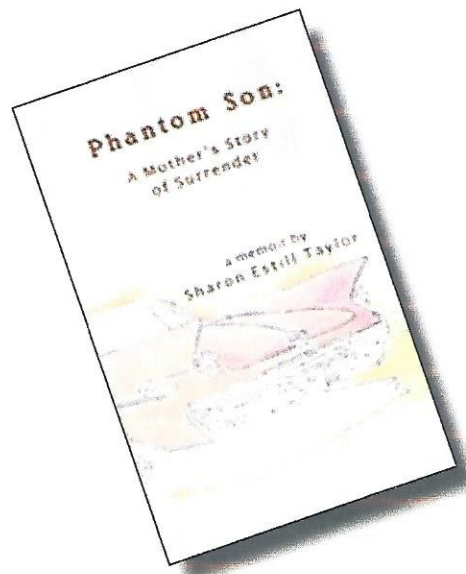
In her first memoir at age 70, Taylor recounts her struggle with the adoption system of that era with humor and honesty, and how she persevered in her search and ultimate reunion with her son.

"(*Phantom Son*) bridges a time when unwed women endured devastating discrimination and pressure to give up their parental rights, to a time when searching for and finding these children was more accepted and facilitated by society," states John Harvey, professor of psychology, emeritus, at the University of Iowa, and editor of the *Journal of Loss and Trauma*. "Beyond all, this is a story of grief, courage, and redemption."

While the reader experiences the author's journey from love-struck teenager to expectant mother to powerful advocate for other birthmothers there also are smaller sub-stories, including the loss of Taylor's father in World War II, and how that event affected her family over the decades. The sub-stories fascinate

and contribute to the gripping nature of this memoir.

An educator, speaker and writer, Taylor tells her story in the tradition of an Irish storyteller - with humor, self-deprecation, poignancy and triumph. It's highly readable despite it being a heavy and emotional topic. The author doesn't shy away from details, yet she tells them with grace and



eloquence. Her candor is courageous.

Taylor's honesty about her teen pregnancy also is a reminder of how far we have come as a society in terms of the acceptance of out-of-wedlock births. Instead of the rampant shaming and secrecy these pregnancies held post-war, today these "conditions" are now not only tolerated but celebrated. The shame Taylor felt - or was made to feel - hardly

exists today, which is why readers must remember *Phantom Son* is from a different era.

Deborah Stokes, PhD, director of the Better Brain Center in Washington, D.C., states that the impact of societal and religious silencing and shame heaped upon mothers like Taylor in the 1960s was nothing short of traumatic abuse.

"This is an important read for anyone, but I particularly recommend this book for those whose lives have been affected by the disenfranchised grief of coerced adoption," Stokes adds.

*Phantom Son* is available at Amazon.com.

And there's more to come from Taylor. This fall she will release *Phantom Father: A Daughter's Quests for Elegy*, recounting her search for her father, 1Lt. Shannon Estill, a P-38 fighter pilot and one of the last casualties of World War II, and the recovery of his remains. Visit [myphantomfather.com](http://myphantomfather.com) or [sharonestilltaylor.com](http://sharonestilltaylor.com) for details.

Taylor is a retired professor from Saint Martin's University in Washington, and resides in Arizona. She will be speaking and signing books at the National WWII Museum's yearly international conference in New Orleans, Nov. 17-19, 2016.