

Willow In A Storm: A Memoir

James Peter Taylor and Kathleen Murphy-Taylor. Scarletta Press (PGW, dist.), \$14.95 paper (320p)
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Early on, Taylor somberly informs his readers that “[m]ost men do not survive four decades of incarceration,” a foreboding revelation that sets the stage for this riveting life story. An unflinching examination of his crime—a bank robbery and homicide committed at age 30—and his resulting conviction, incarceration, spiritual growth and eventual emancipation 40 years later, this tale proves emotional, forthright and inspirational. Writing with the help of his wife, the halfway-house counselor he met after his release from prison at age 70, Taylor looks back without self-pity or regret, making the casual cruelty he endures and his straightforward survival strategies all the more chilling. Smart, determined and hopeful, Taylor makes use of his prison days learning the law and helping out his fellow inmates, “so [they] would not turn on me while I slept.” Also resonant are murky scenes of a painful adolescence spent with an emotionally abusive father, his only adult accomplices—beloved Uncle Louis and Grandma Taylor—having succumbed to early deaths. That Taylor eventually finds peace, going so far as to “thank God for confinement because it gave me time to change,” speaks to the enormous heart of this honest, affecting account. (Sept.)

