

Trio of war stories all engaging tales

A NURSE AT WAR by Joan Woodward and Glenys Mitchell. Te Waihora Press (102 Wildberry Street, Christchurch 8023), 167pp, \$45

GOOD LUCK TO ALL THE LADS by Peter Cox. J. J. Angerstein and Associates (PO Box 1263, Christchurch Mail Centre, Christchurch 8140), 288pp, \$39.99.

THE NUT THAT CHANGED MY LIFE by Bruce Hayman. GH Wellington, 272pp. Reviewed by Mike Crean.

Generations after events that shook the world, war books keep on coming. These latest three stand out as character studies more than war books, and are the better for it.

The name Emily Peter is not well known but readers of this book will say it should be.

Peter forsook her mid-Canterbury pastoralist gentry background to train as a nurse in London. She worked among all classes in England and served in the Boer War and World War 1.

She returned to Canterbury and died in 1927.

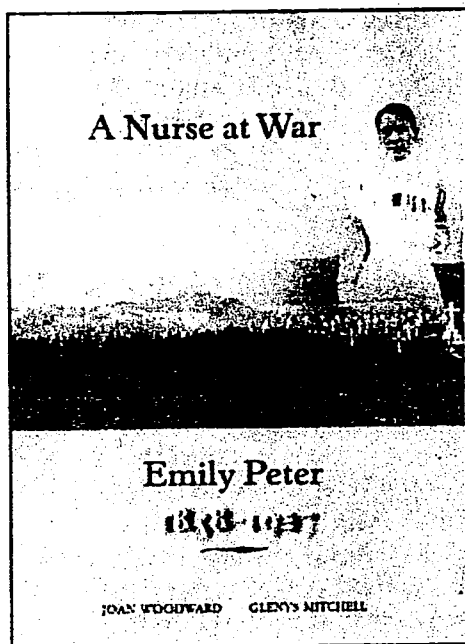
This book, which includes excerpts from Peter's diaries, reveals a tireless worker who maintained the highest standards of personal conduct and nursing. She stood up to doctors when necessary and always put her patients first.

Brian Cox would not tell his family about World War 2 but one comment he made seemed to convey his nightmares.

"I was at Sidi Rezegh," he would mutter.

New Zealand lost many of its finest young men in the bloody battle of Sidi Rezegh, North Africa, 1941. Nelson man Brian Cox was there, with the 27th machine gun battalion.

His son, Peter, tells the story and



provides a rounded view of New Zealanders fighting through Greece, Crete and North Africa from 1939 to 1943. Portraying the war through his father's eyes, he balances combat with comradeship, humour with horror, fear with friendship, boredom with bawdiness.

The writing is moving but never mawkish. Few war books trace the changes in men's psyches from idyllic upbringing in New Zealand to worn and weary veteran soldiers as convincingly as this.

Very different but equally compelling is Bruce Hayman's autobiography. The south Canterbury farmer, who died in May this year, was a bomber pilot in World War 2. He writes of his love for the high country of New Zealand in a mostly lighter vein.

His war memoir is gritty and fascinating. It brings out the tension of men risking all in flimsy aircraft against enemy guns and describes his close calls and the crash that ended his war. The title, *The Nut That Changed My Life*, is a reference to a loose nut which brought about an emergency landing in North Africa en route to the Middle East, altering the course of his life.

These new releases are highly recommended.