

BELLEVUE HEIGHTS

Changi art on website

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AS A prisoner of war in Singapore, **Des Bettany** painted to stay sane, to keep his head.

But his art almost had the opposite effect when his Japanese captors discovered it.

The British gunner produced hundreds of pictures at Changi PoW camp from 1942-45, including cartoons and theatre flyers for shows put on by the prisoners.

"That's the whole reason he did the art, to keep his sanity, he told us," says Des's son **Keith**, of Bellevue Heights.

But a book of cartoons poking fun at the Japanese fell into enemy hands and landed him before an angry general. "General Sito stated that if he ever did any more drawings or paintings like these, he would give him a 'short haircut' with his sword, meaning he would be beheaded," says Mr Bettany, 60.

Seventy years on he and his siblings have created a website to showcase their late father's 300 surviving works. Many more were confis-



THERAPY: Keith Bettany's father Des was a prolific artist and produced hundreds of pictures at Changi.

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cated or given away. Des, who endured forced labour, made makeshift paints from leaves, charcoal and clay. "The brushes were made out of human hair and bamboo."

Des, originally from Lancashire, drew caricatures at cinemas for pocket money in his teens. Impressed by the

Australian soldiers at Changi, he moved his family to Adelaide in the 1950s and taught at SA School of Art, becoming assistant principal.

He lived at St Marys for 40 years until his death in 2000.

www.changipowart.com