



MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

Ben Steele POW Drawings

Directions:

Examine this set of drawings made by Ben Steele, a Bataan Death March survivor. The drawings depict his experience during the Death March and his time as a POW in Japanese custody. Carefully examine each drawing and do the following:

1. Describe what is happening in each drawing.
2. Describe the mood of the drawing.
3. Describe why you think the drawing was created and what message you think Mr. Steele is trying to convey about his experience through the drawing.

Thinking Further:

1. The fatality rate for soldiers in Japanese P.O.W. camps was 24%, while in Europe it was 3%. Why do you think there was such a difference in the fatality rates between the two theaters of war?
2. After examining the drawings, what difficulties do you think P.O.W.'s experienced after the war as they returned home? Why do you think so?
3. Which event during Mr. Steele's experience as a P.O.W. do you think was most (important, terrifying, hardest?) on him and why?

Additional Activity:

Based on the information you learned from the drawings, design a book cover or film poster for a biography of Mr. Steele's life.



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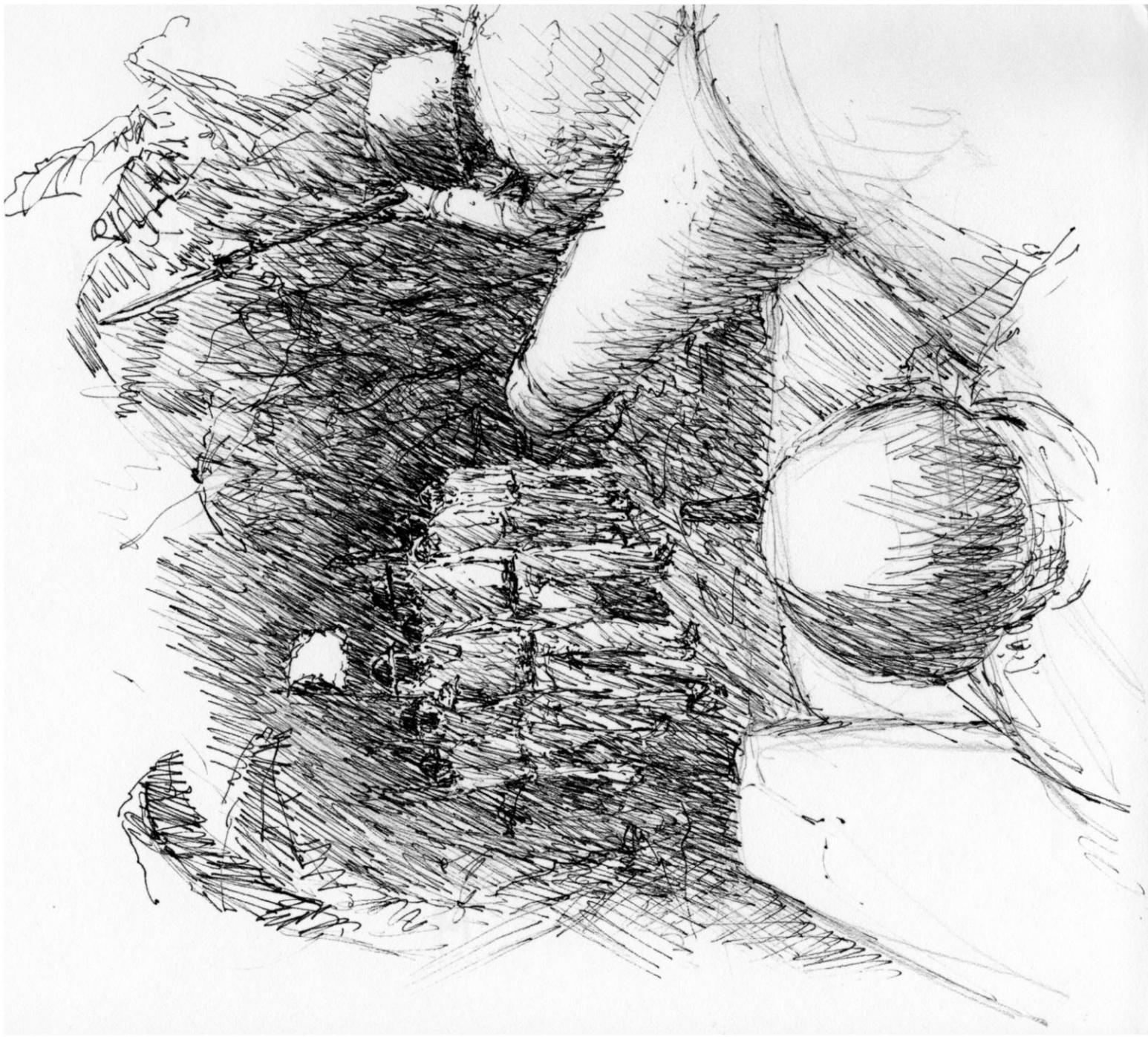
Fighting on Bataan. Ben Steele was with the U.S. Army Air Corps in the Philippines, but once all planes were destroyed he became an infantryman.

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On April 9, 1942, Filipino and American forces on Bataan were surrendered to the Japanese. In this image, a group of Americans surrender to a Japanese tank crew.

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The Bataan Death March. Seventy-five thousand Filipinos and Americans, diseased and starving, were marched 65 miles with little food or water to the town of San Fernando. It is estimated that 10,000 perished on the march.

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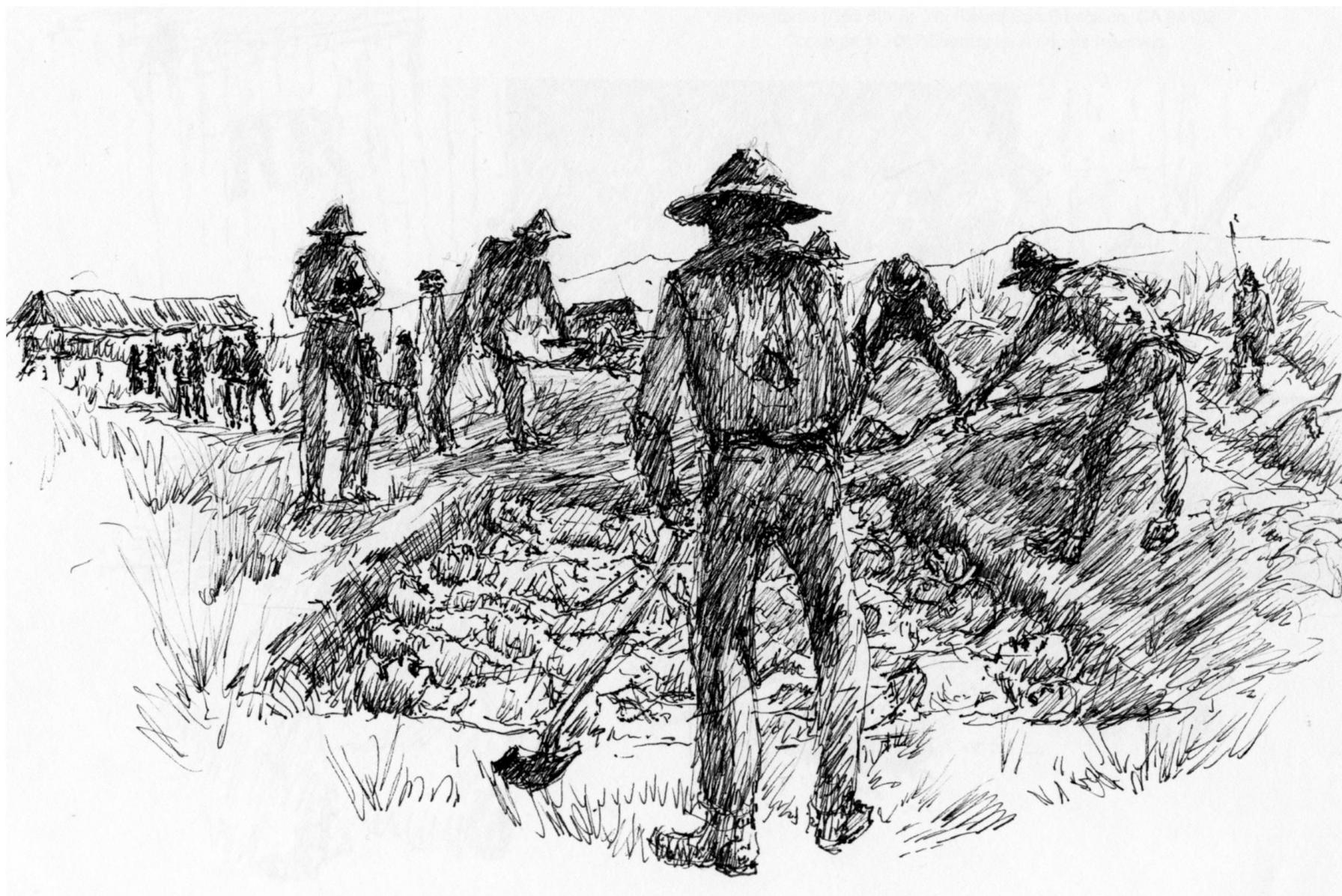


After the 65-mile Death March, the prisoners reached San Fernando where they were packed into rail cars for the 22 mile journey to Capas and their ultimate destination, Camp O'Donnell.

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At Camp O'Donnell, a notorious P.O.W. camp, men die at a rate of 400 a day. Ben Steele and many other prisoners served on the burial details.

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Brutality was constant for prisoners of the Japanese and like all the others, Ben Steele witnessed it first hand.

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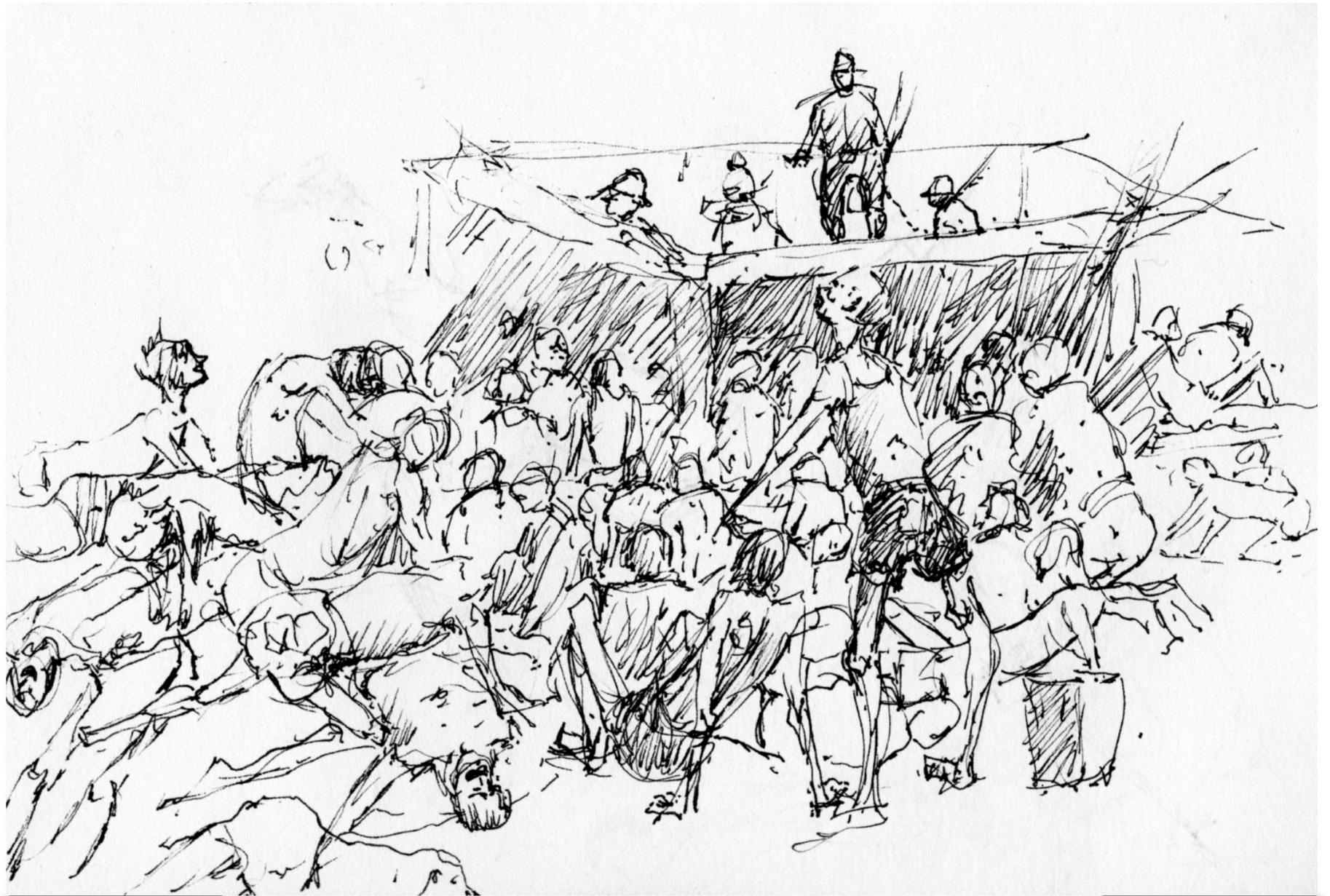
Starving, malnourished prisoners at Cabanatuan POW Camp, Philippines, ca. 1944.
By 1944, after two years of captivity most prisoners had only rags to wear.

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From 1943-1945 Japan shipped prisoners from the Philippines to Japan to serve as slave labor. Men were packed in the holds of "Hell Ships" under the most extreme conditions. Thousands died en route to Japan.

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After arrival in Japan, Steele was placed in the prison camp at
Omine—Machi. He was forced to work in a coal mine as POW #359.

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