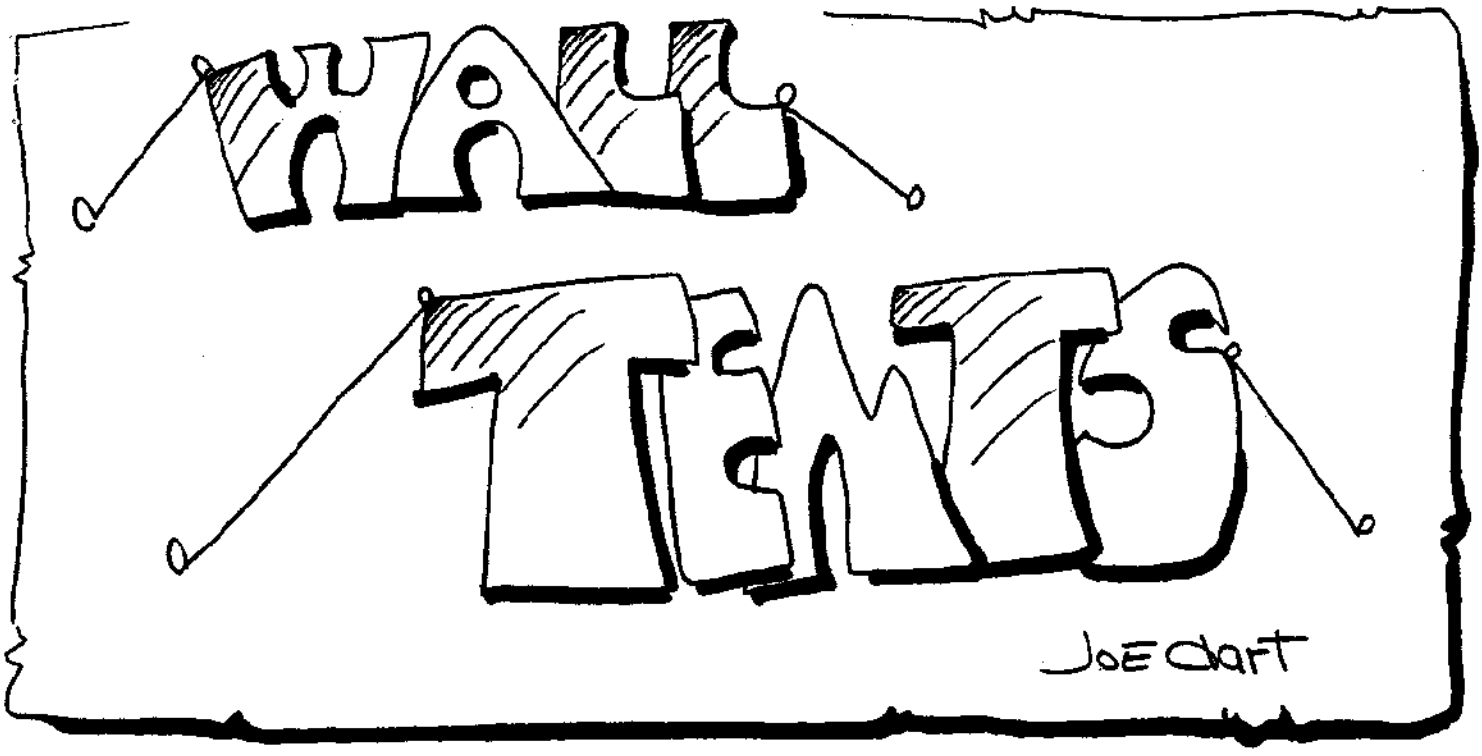


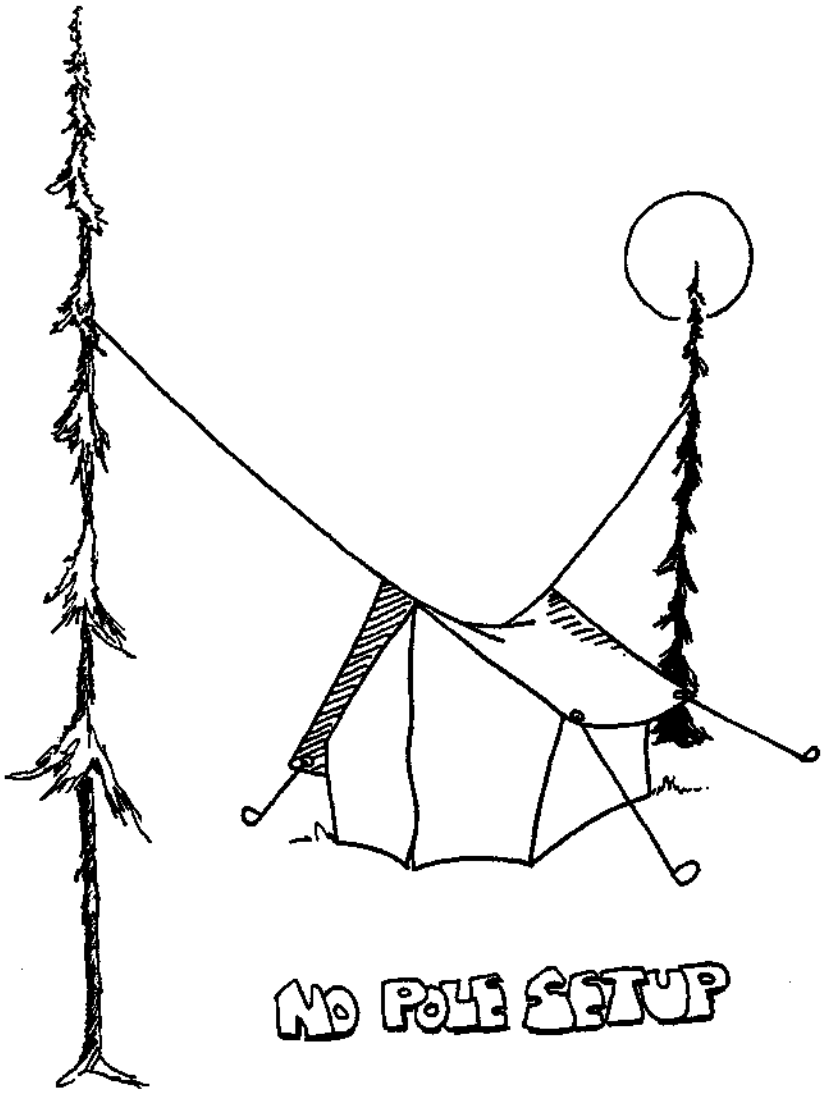
The wall tent is the tent of choice by trappers in the north. You will find wall tents set up in the most remote places from Alaska to Labrador, and it has been this way at least since the Civil War. The reasons for their popularity and long use among trappers are many. They are roomy, versatile, inexpensive, tough and traditional. But light, they are not. Many trappers use wall tents as line 'cabins' and leave them set up as permanent camps year 'round.

This article on setting up a wall tent camp is based on the first hand experience of trapper-guide Pete Shepherd, Dave Applebee and Craig Salsbury of Alaska Tent and Tarp, trapper-guide Pete Buist and other trappers and outdoorsmen who use wall tents extensively.

They come in almost any size, but the two most commonly found wall tents in the bush are the (8 by 10 ft) one man tent, or the (10 by 12 ft) two man tent. Of the two, the (10 by 12 ft) is by far the standard. Wall tents are not light weight, and for that reason are used for more 'permanent' camps where there is river, air or snowmachine or even road access.

The easiest way to set up a wall tent requires no poles or other structure than two trees spaced such that you can set the tent up as in the illustration titled **No Pole Setup**. Although this set up is relatively quick, the tent is subject to the vagaries of wind and is not tall enough for extended use in comfort.

Another way to set up is to use the **Three Metal Pole Setup** as illustrated. The solid ridge and support poles give the tent a more stable structure. Additional stability for the eaves can be obtained by cutting sticks the height of the side wall (3' 9" in 10' by 12' tents) of the tent and putting nails with cut off heads into the ends. Then put these nails through the eave grommets. This set up is used in places with little or no indigenous poles. A variation of this is to use two poles with cut off nail heads in the



ends as support poles with no ridge pole. These support poles use the grommets at the top ends of the tent and the ridge is spread by pulling it taut.

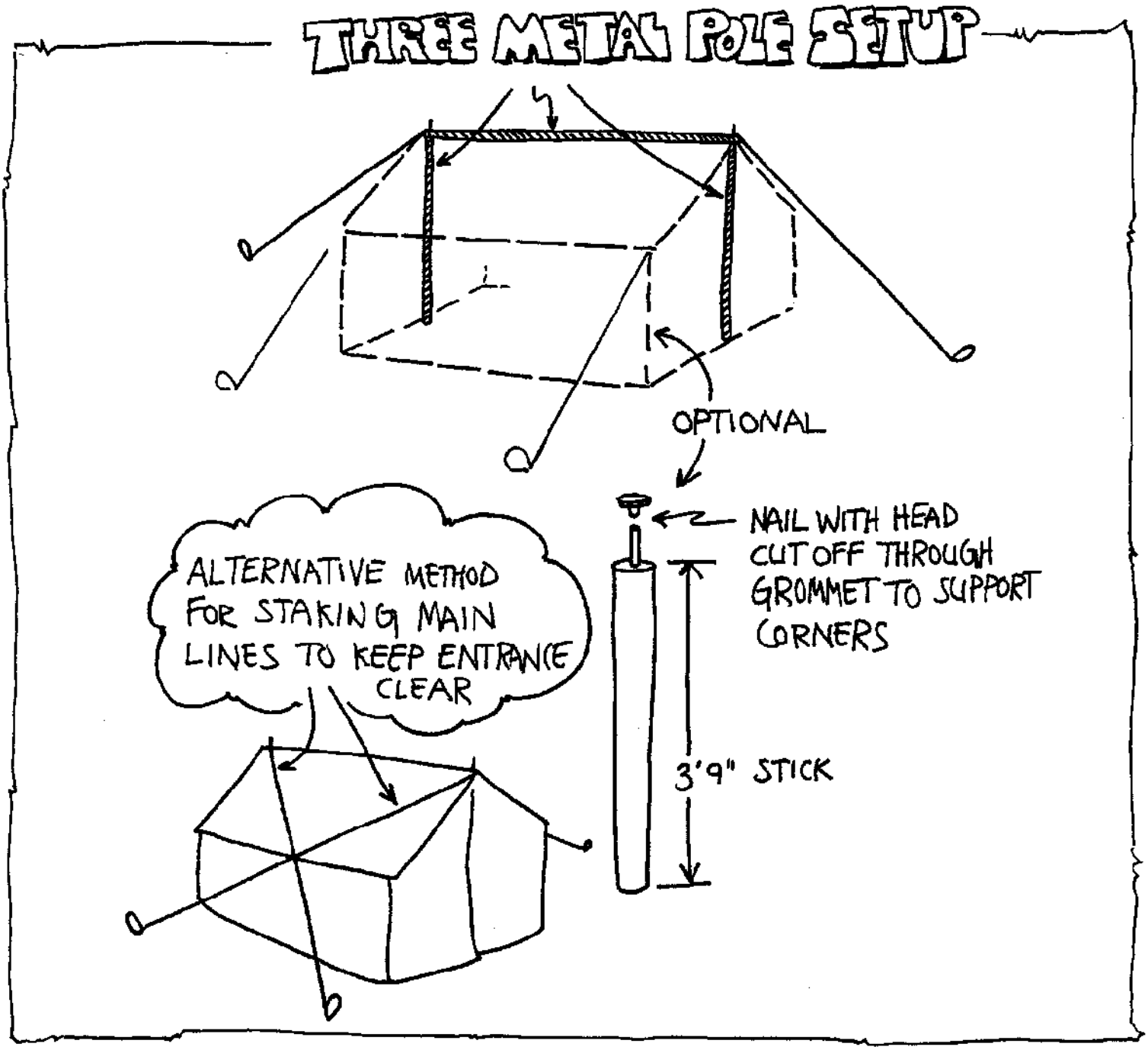
If the area has a supply of spruce trees for poles, the most common type of set up is the **Spruce Pole Setup.** This takes advantage of holes which are built (for this setup) into the ends of wall tents that allow a ridge pole to pass through. According to my calculations, for a ten by 12 wall tent, 3" to 4" poles measuring from 14 to 16 feet(max) should be used depending on how much you want sticking out at the ends. (there is a utility in having places to hang stuff.) One rule of thumb I have heard is to cut poles two feet longer than the length of the tent.

Unless you use nails or wire to tie the poles together, you will have to use cord or rope lashing. The two most common methods for lashing these poles with rope are shown in the illustrations: **Lashing The Support Poles** and **Lashing Eave Poles+ Supports.**

Notice that behind the tent in the illustration for the **Spruce Pole Setup** there is a pole called the 'Brace Pole.' This pole is lashed to the end of the ridge pole or to a support pole, while the other end is either tied to a tree or firmly attached to the ground. The purpose of the brace pole is to keep the tent from falling forward or backward. Sometimes more than one brace pole is used, one in front of the tent and one behind the tent. The variations depend on the specific situation at hand.

Green spruce boughs are often used for bedding. They are set on the bare ground inside the tent.. but if the tent is to be used for extended periods, a wood floor or 'tent platform' is normally built. This also provides the opportunity to raise the tent up a little higher to give more head room inside.

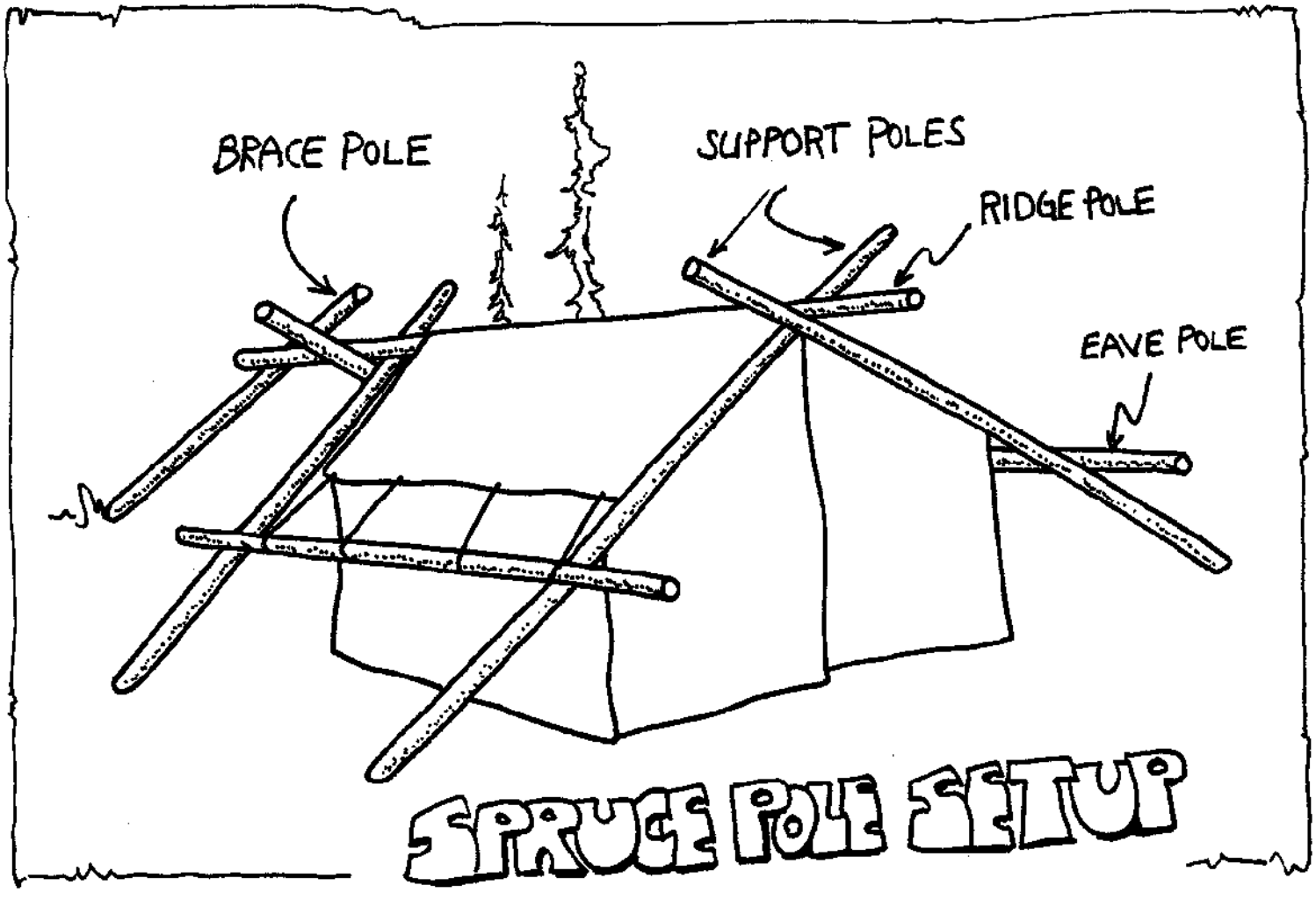
IMPORTANT! Do Not build any of the following tent structures before you measure the inside dimensions of the **actual tent** you will be putting on that structure! If you build it too large, and the tent will not fit over it... you will be very, very unhappy. There is much variation in the sizes of tents. A ten by twelve is on the average (9'9" by 11'8") but that average can vary by



as much as two inches. They are 7' tall, with 3' 9" side walls.. again, this is the average, and each tent has to be measured individually.

Using native materials, it is hard to build a smooth flat floor. (although it can be done.) The minimum material that has to be brought in for a tent platform is the plywood that will cover the floor. Due to transportation (size) restrictions on snowmachines and small planes, the plywood is usually cut into 2' by 8 ` pieces before it is taken to the construction site in the bush.

A tent floor can be constructed using plywood and indigenous logs using the plan in the **Floor Joist** illustrations. Then the two foot tall (or taller) walls can be made of logs as in



the **Log Tent Structure** illustrations.

There are two methods for making the corners with logs. The first interlocks the logs as shown. Another method is to use the "Hudson Bay corner" illustrated (also shown on the back cover of the November 93 issue of the Alaska Trapper.. built by the Meierotto brothers.)

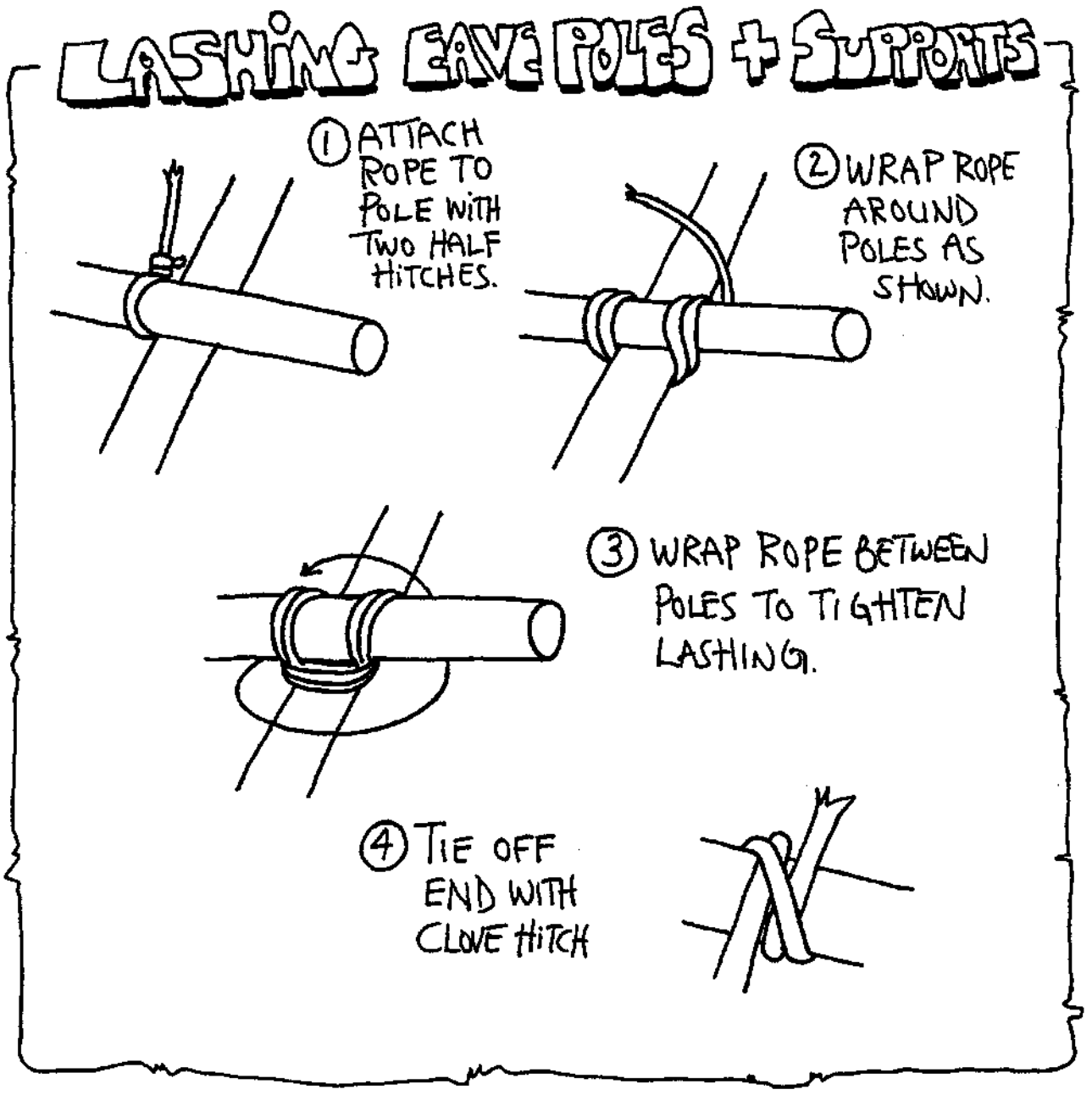
All of the logs are nailed together for stability.

One important point must be made. You may want to add diagonals for structural strength in walls. If you do not use rafters, be sure to use the two poles that span the roof diagonally as shown in the illustration Top View.

Finally, you may be setting up your permanent tent in a place that has no natural building poles around or available. All the materials for the tent platform are then brought in to the site from town.

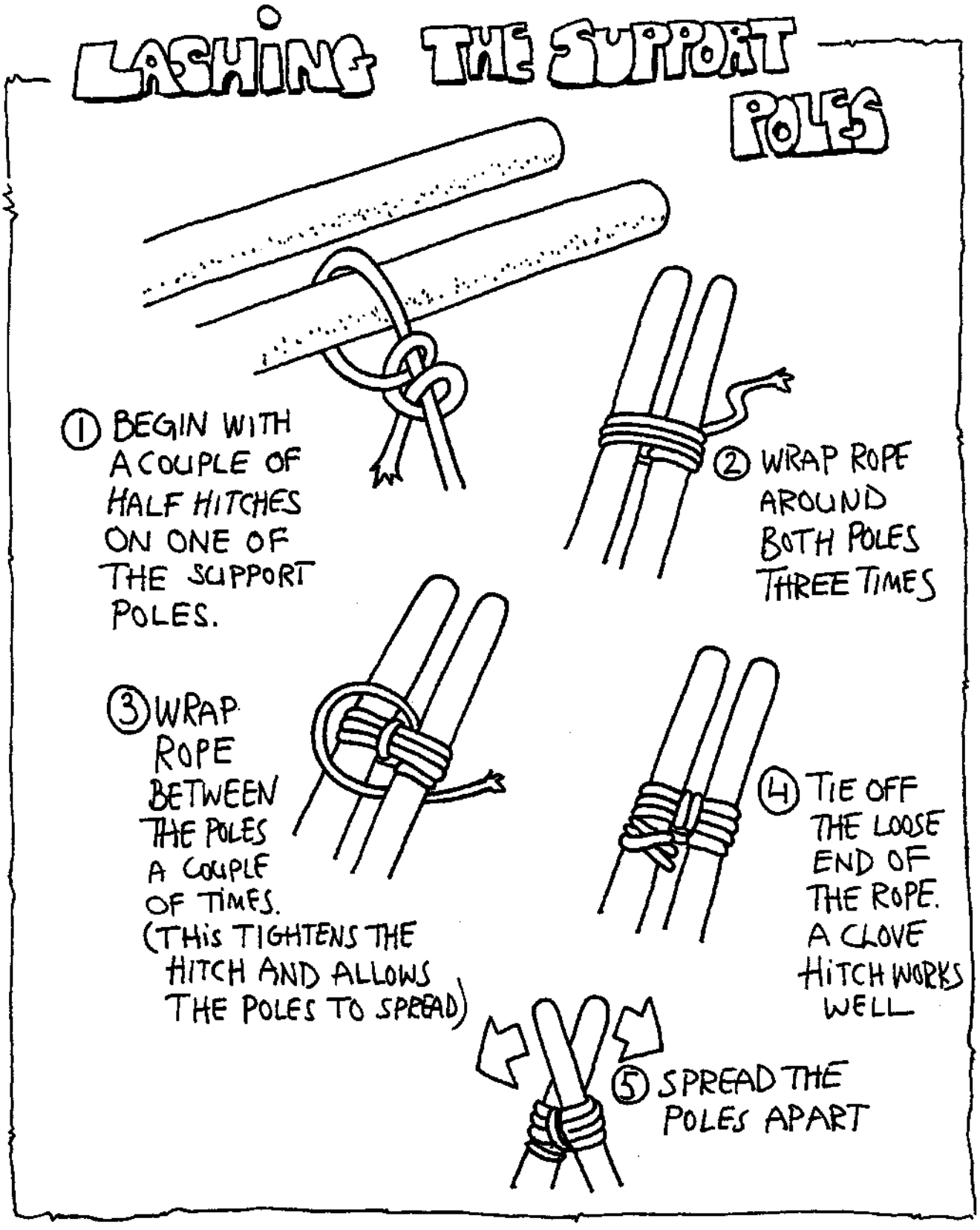
In the illustrations I am including only a few of the important measurements. The only wood you will need is two by fours and plywood. As you can see in the illustration **Permanent Tent Structure**, you have the frame for a small cabin by the time you get to this level of tent frame construction. But a well constructed frame can last for years.. unless the bears, ravens, camp robbers, mice, squirrels, rot, insects and other scoundrels get to it.

After you build one of these structures, you drop the tent over the top and line the



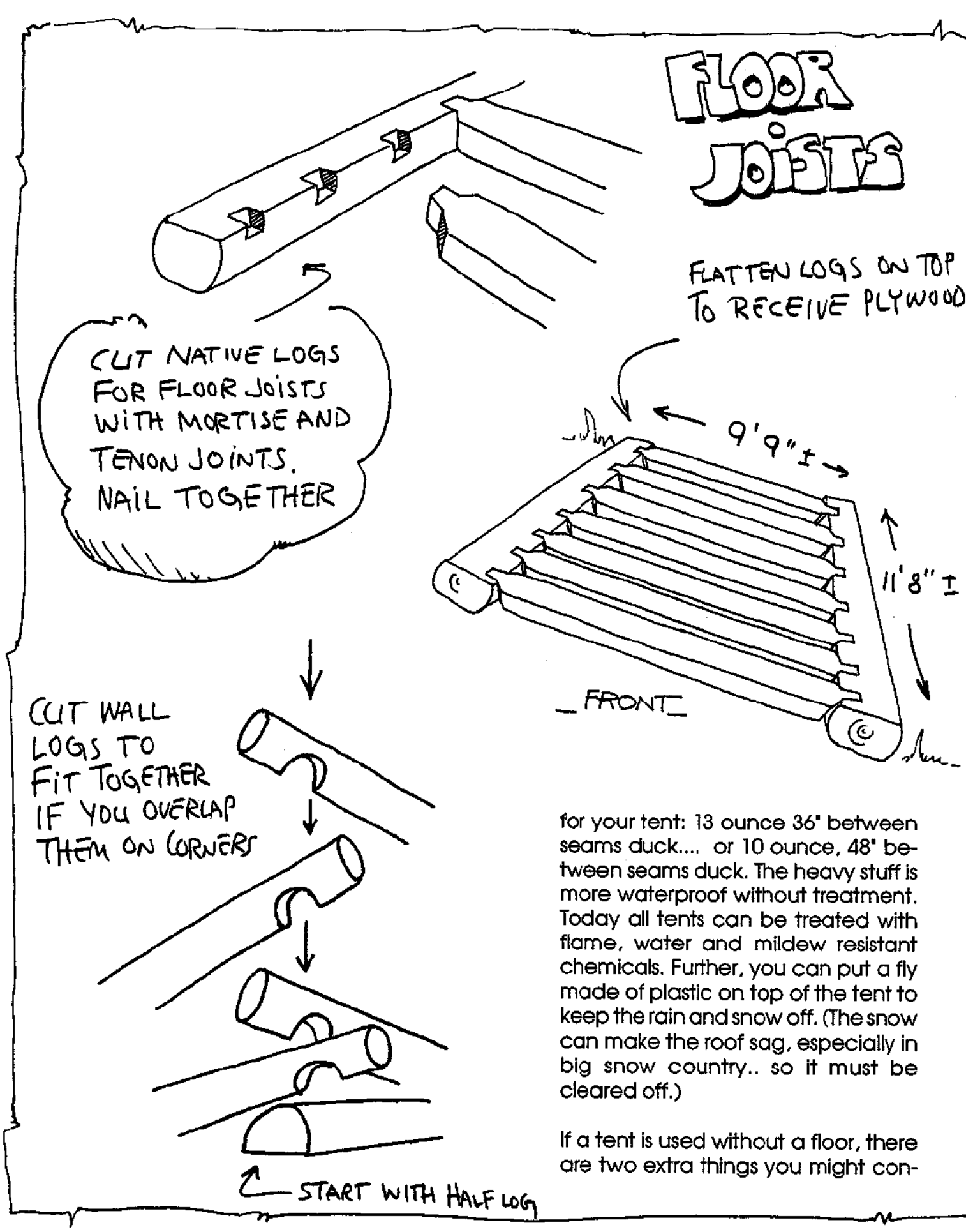
doorway up. Then tack or staple the tent to the door frame and along the walls to the log or plywood lower wall to seal the tent and platform together. A door is optional. A simple piece of plywood with a couple of hinges.. or you can leave the tent canvas to work as a door. Some trappers don't even make the door frame.. they just leave a post there.

Most permanent tents have a small wood stove in them. It is traditional to have the stove just to the left as you enter the tent. A rule of thumb is to put the stoves chimney 3 feet in from the front wall, and the stove three feet from the roof and from the wall. There are metal stove jacks that allow the stove pipe to go through the tent roof without making contact with the canvas. Aside from one that you can put in yourself, there is a special fireproof pipe jack (not metal) that can be installed on your tent by Alaska Tent and Tarp which gives more fire protection than the normal pipe jack. In any case, don't let the stove pipe get cherry red or you can have a tent fire. The chimney normally goes up through the roof, but in the west, using a bendable



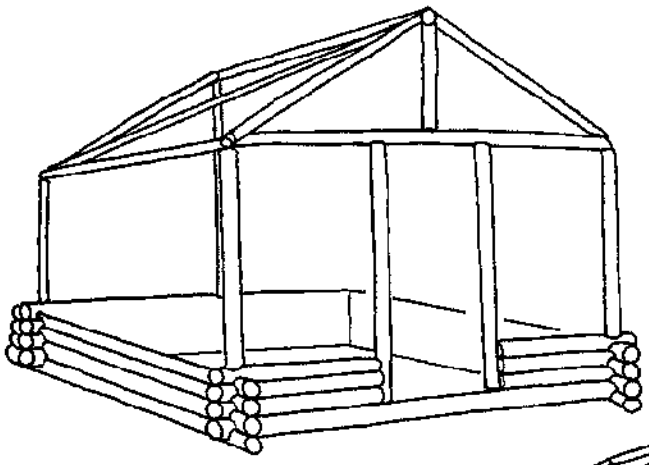
elbow, some people put the stove pipe through the front or back wall. A 5" chimney is a common size, however 3", 4", and 6" stove pipes are also used.

You can choose between two materials



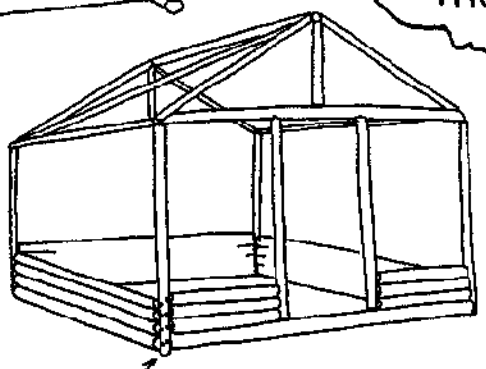
for your tent: 13 ounce 36" between seams duck.... or 10 ounce, 48" between seams duck. The heavy stuff is more waterproof without treatment. Today all tents can be treated with flame, water and mildew resistant chemicals. Further, you can put a fly made of plastic on top of the tent to keep the rain and snow off. (The snow can make the roof sag, especially in big snow country.. so it must be cleared off.)

If a tent is used without a floor, there are two extra things you might con-



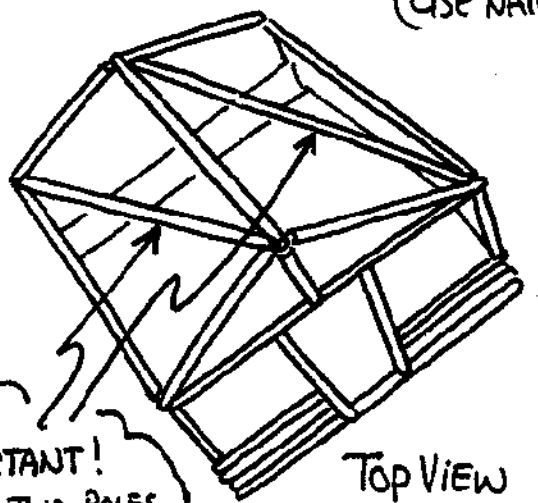
SHOWING TWO TYPES OF CORNERS: OVERLAPPING LOGS AND HUDSON BAY. THESE WALLS REACH FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE TENT WALL TO THE PLATFORM FLOOR.

LOG TENT STRUCTURE



'HUDSON BAY' CORNERS

(USE NAILS)



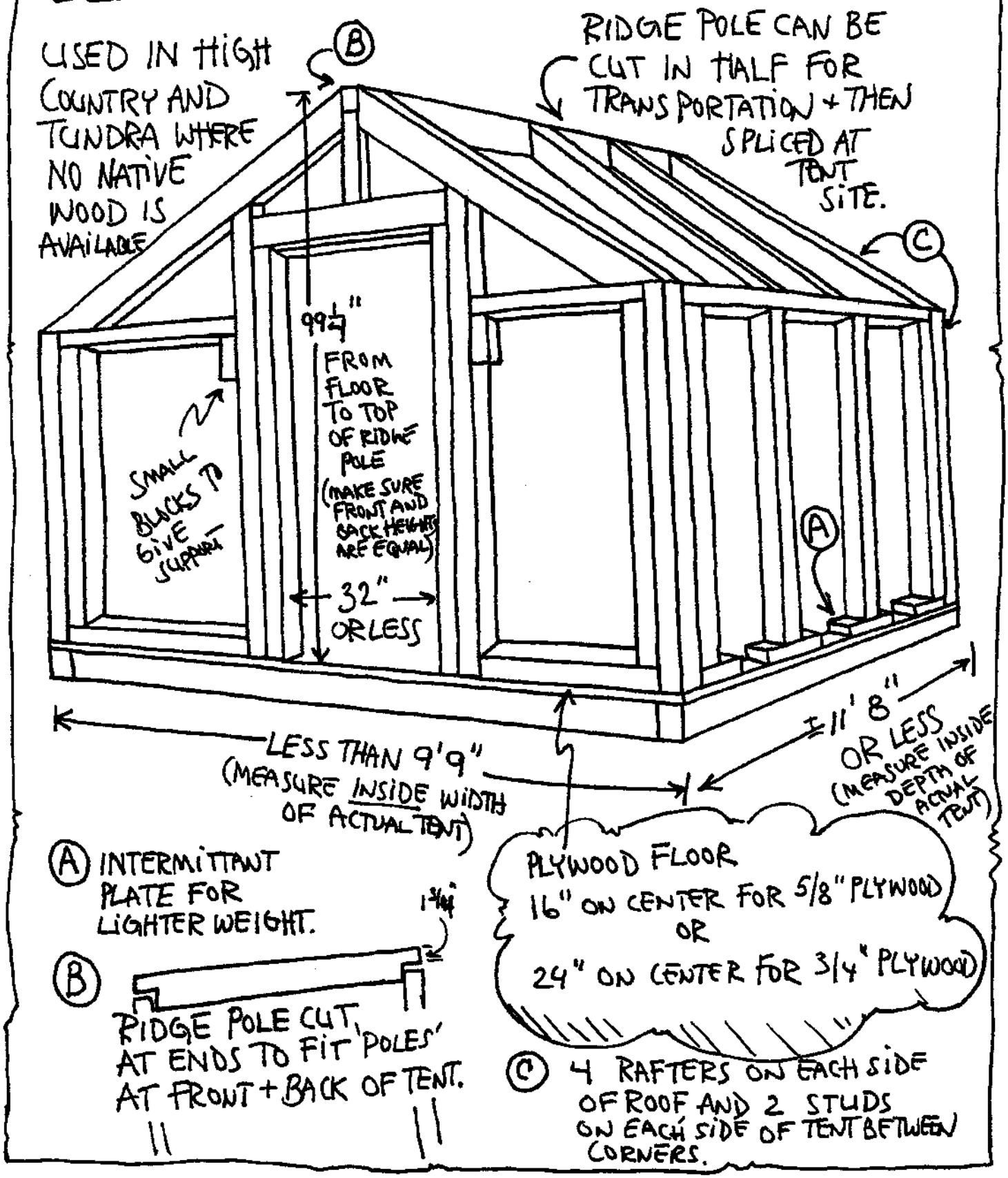
Top View

IMPORTANT! THESE TWO POLES THAT REACH ACROSS THE TWO SIDES OF THE ROOF, AS SHOWN, GIVE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY TO THE ROOF. DO NOT OMIT THEM.

sider having added to the tent when it is made. The first is a one foot wide vinyl **Sod Cloth** which is added to the bottom around the inside of the tent. It takes up the slack when the tent is on uneven ground. The second addition is a nylon **Snow Flap**. This is a 12 inch piece sewn around the outside bottom of the tent so logs can be laid on it in winter when staking is not possible. Both of these have been used on wall tents for over a hundred years. They work! The advantage of this arrangement over a sewn in floor is that a tarp can be used on the ground inside, and can be taken outside to shake off when it gets too dirty.

In the old days I have seen

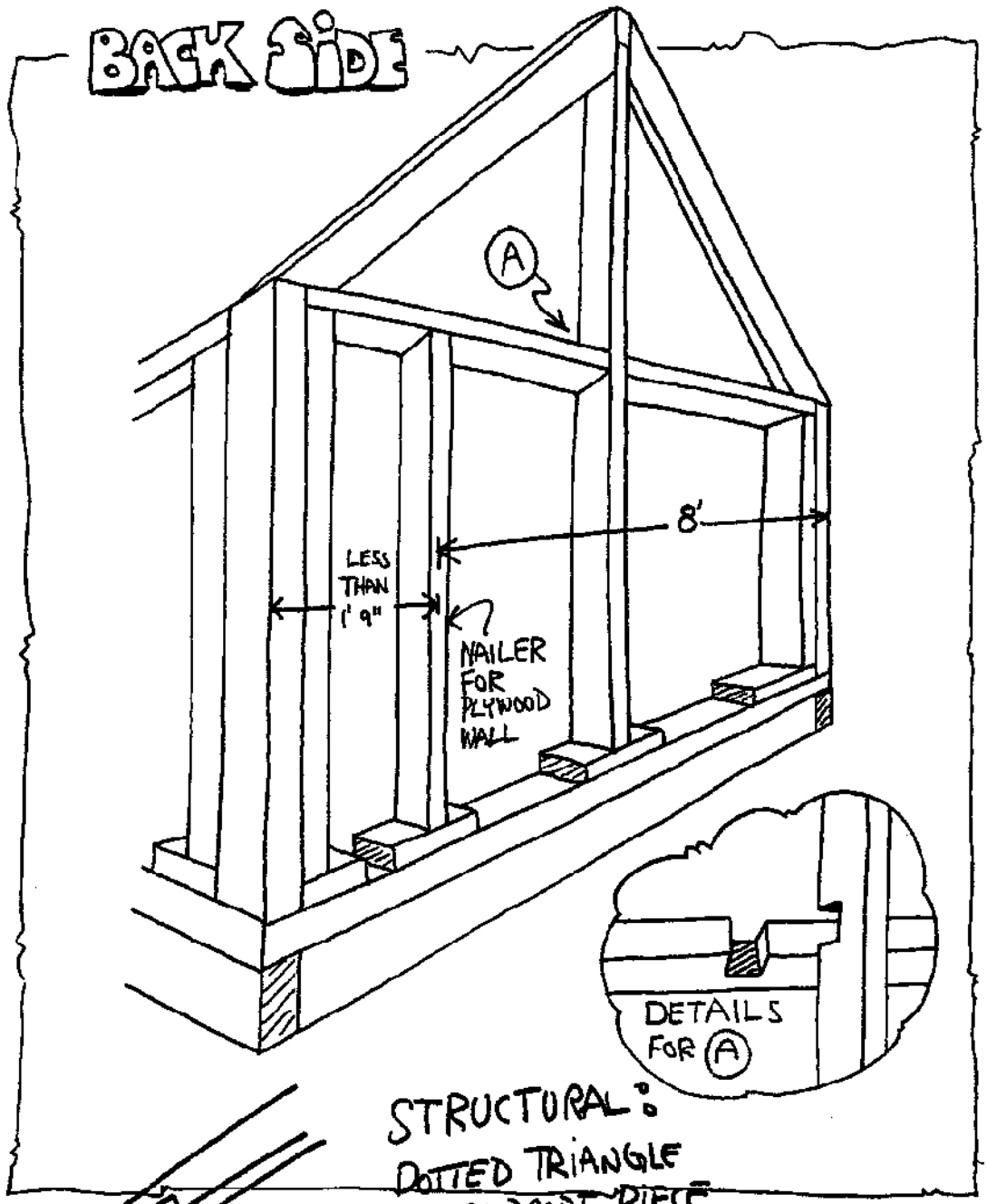
"PERMANENT" TENT STRUCTURE

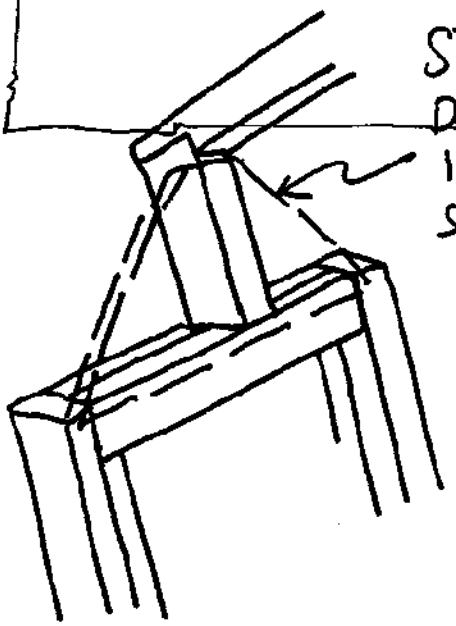


(A) INTERMITTANT PLATE FOR LIGHTER WEIGHT.

(B) RIDGE POLE CUT, AT ENDS TO FIT 'POLES' AT FRONT + BACK OF TENT.

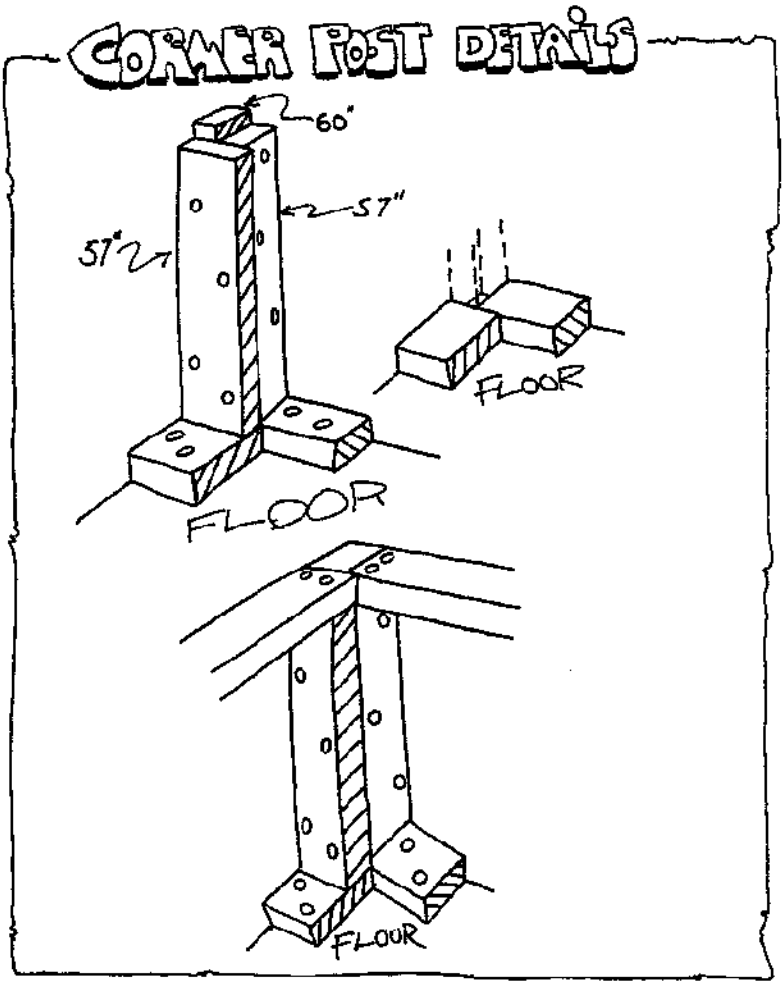
(C) 4 RAFTERS ON EACH SIDE OF ROOF AND 2 STUDS ON EACH SIDE OF TENT BETWEEN CORNERS.

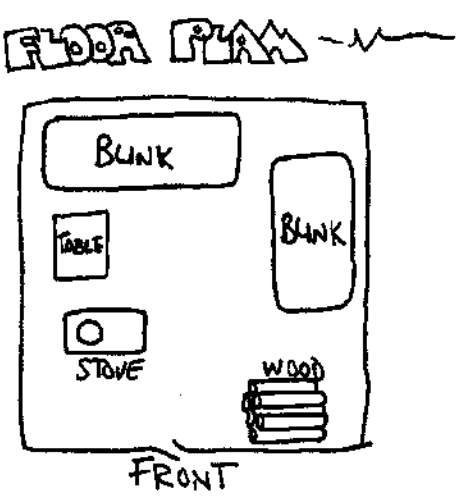




STRUCTURAL:
DOTTED TRIANGLE IS SUPPORT PIECE SCREWED/NAILED IN ABOVE DOOR INSIDE TENT.

THIS PLAN USES 2X4'S FOR FLOOR JOISTS





indian camps in Canada that have no floor on the tent save the spruce boughs and the little `air-tight' stoves made out of old lard cans with 3 inch chimneys.These are set up on four one inch diameter green stakes that are driven into the ground. These act as legs for the stove but they are not attached to it. Sand was put in the bottom of these stoves to keep them from burning through. The problem with this arrangement is when the wind blows the canvas shakes the chimney which in turn shakes the stove around. The stove, not attached to the legs can even fall off the legs if the shaking is too great.

Although you can get the general idea of how to set up the various wall tent structures, there are as many ways as there are trappers, and you have to decide what you want.