



Do you believe this?

Note the two diagonals from the main beams discussed later in this chapter.

This is the third ladder which hangs out over nothing. It acts to stabilize the floor above.

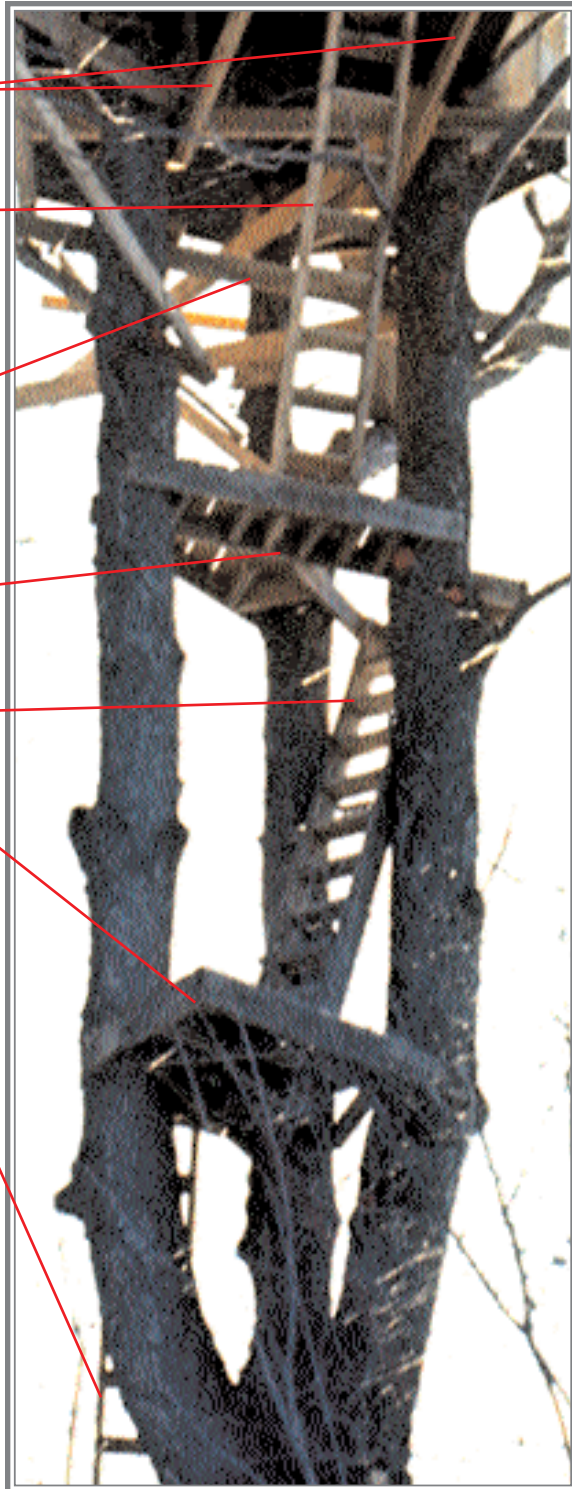
This is the intermediate scaffolding, 25 feet off the ground, from which I built the third floor.

Second platform 20 feet from the ground

The second run of steps

First platform plus 10ft. off the ground

The first run of steps.



# The House

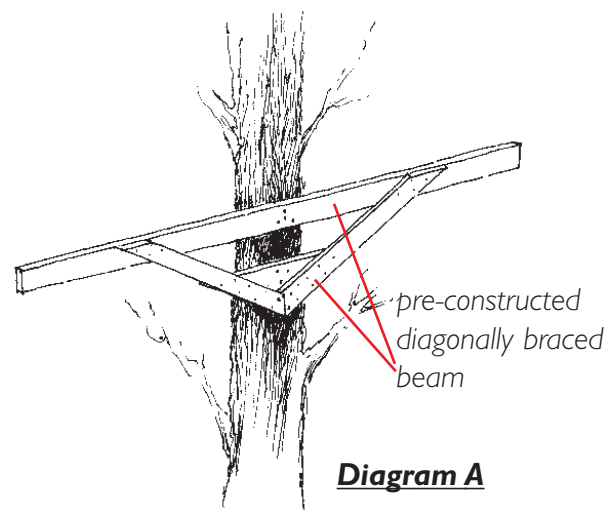
## Chapter 3

# Main Platform

**B**y the time I erected the third temporary scaffolding 25 feet above the ground, I was building platforms with confidence. Up to this point I had built expediently but now I was ready to build the floor of my house and would have to live in what I constructed. At elevation 30 feet there two main trunks a little over 4 ft. apart with a third trunk which was dead above this height in the tree. At this point I had to begin my new home.

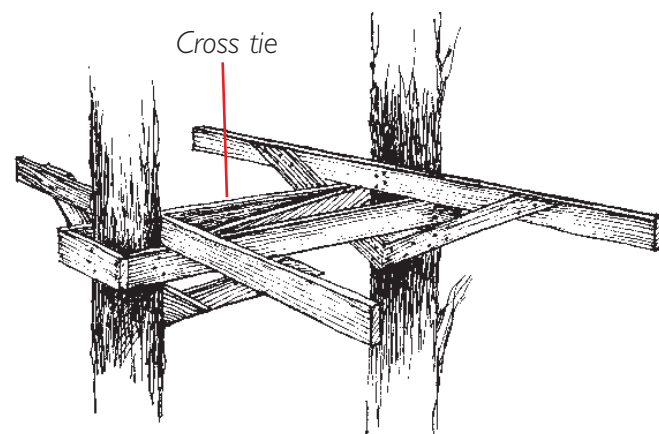
**I** decided to make two major horizontal beams equally balanced on these two main trunks. These two identical beams extended from the trunks in

each direction. Installing these pre-constructed diagonally braced beams each weighing 60 pound on the trunks, in the wind, was no simple matter. I had to lift and hold each in place while leveling and pounding large spikes through both the beam and the tree to firmly attach them to the trunks. (*Diagram A*) As difficult as it was, I still found it best to work along at this dangerous height. One false move could have landed me dead or in the hospital.

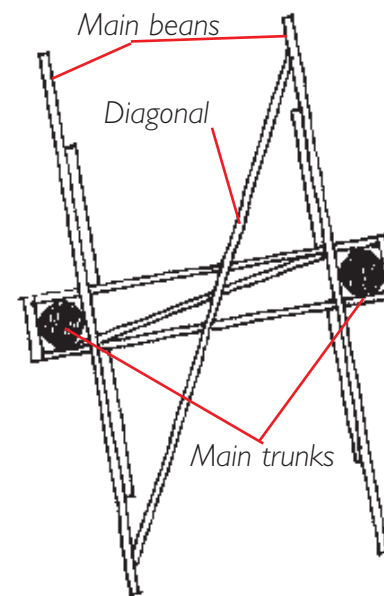


**Diagram A**

With these two main horizontal beams in place, I then connected the two trunks so they would not move apart. (*Diagram B*) Each preceding platform had connected these trunks rigidly, so I was continuing this structural principle. This made the three trunks act as a unit which would be stronger than each acting separately. With this cross-tie in place making for a good ridged base upon which to construct, I got to the matter of laying in the floor joist (floor beams between major beams). I chose to do this on the diagonal rather than the obvious straight across method (*Diagram C*). (I did this because a square is not a stable structure but a triangle is.) This diagonal method meant lots more work for me, as I had to cut all those angles, but I want-



**Diagram B**

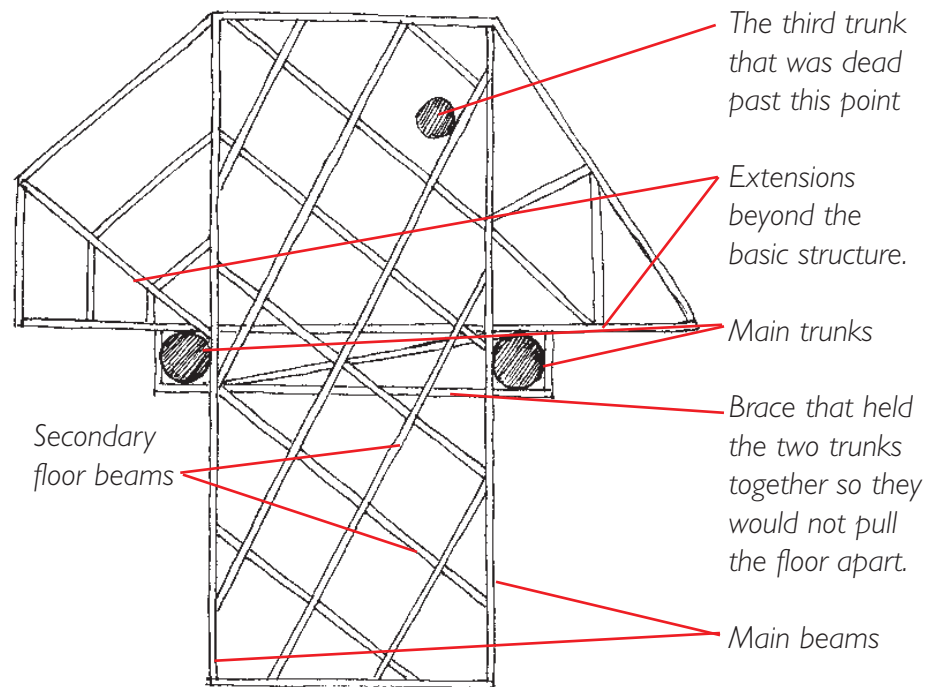


**Diagram C**

ed to prevent the floor from racking, caused by the twisting trunks in the wind.

As I worked, I was forced to move out over thin air and place all my weight on the boards I had just installed. This process made me realize how much trust I was placing in my own craftsmanship. It was like building a structure in mid air and then walking out on it to construct more. This I termed, “Zen Carpentry”, due to the concentration

required for every move and action. I had to cut the angled ends of the boards exactly, place them precisely, and nail them while balancing on the edge of a beam 30 feet in the air. You had to know where each hand and foot was before moving a board as the shifting weight of the board moving could throw off your balance if you weren't careful. At this point no mistakes were allowed. Once I dropped my hammer and had to go forty feet down to the slope below the tree to retrieve it. I got down there and looked up realizing how far I would fall so I continued to work alone as another person could add random motions that could be fatal. The one exception to this rule was my puppy. I felt so alone in this dangerous environment that I needed a friend at my side, so I put him in my nail bucket and brought him up for companionship. I was afraid he might try to get out and fall, since it was perched on the edge of beams with no floor boards but he stayed quietly in the bucket, curled up at the bottom with the nails. He would sit up when I talked to him and keep me company when I needed it on that

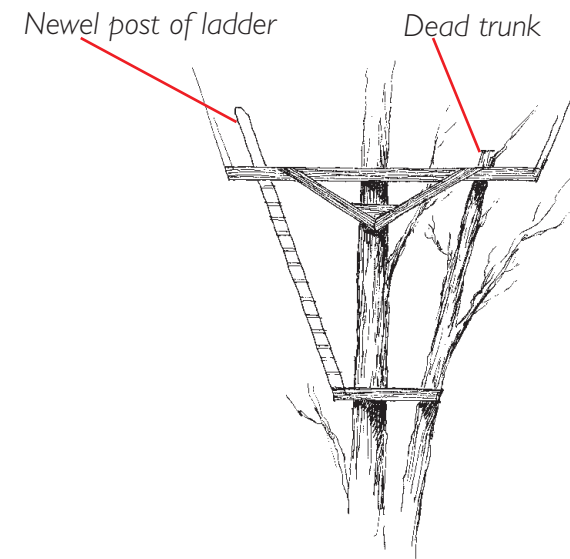
FLOOR FRAMING PLAN *Diagram D*

over cast gray day..

**A**fter completing the floor framing between the two main beams, I began the process of expanding the floor out around the two main trunks in a fan shape from the existing framing. (diagram D) This wasn't practical in the back part of the floor (lower part of the drawing above) because of branching off the main trunks that I would not disturb. I had used the third trunk to stabilize the platform as it intersected the outer part of the floor.



*Main floor framing. This photo shows the floor framing with the underside plywood in place. The dead trunk with red paint has a live branch which went out through the wall.*



**W**ith the floor framing in place, I now took on the tricky task of connect the second platform to the main floor of the house. I had been climbing up through scaffolding to reach this work area and looked forward to easy access with a ladder. On this third ladder run, I was truly going out over thin air. I started on the very narrow second platform (just enough room to stand) and went up at an angle into the end of the floor I had just completed (See diagram and photo this page). I, again, constructed this ladder in the same fashion in the barn, except that I left a

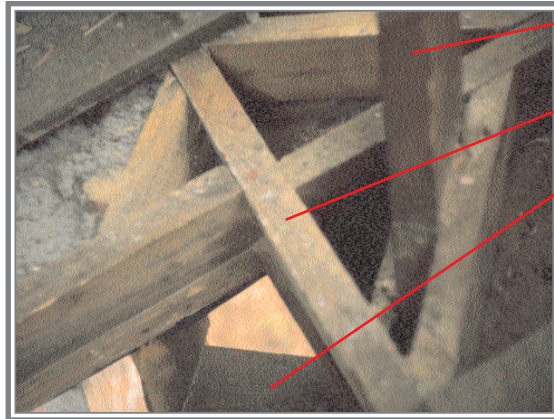


*Third ladder run looking down through the trap door in the main floor of the house, towards the second platform.*

very long extension on the right stringer so that there would be something sturdy to hold on to for support as you came and went through the trap door. Getting this huge ladder 30 feet up was very difficult as it was too heavy and awkward to be hoisted by ropes. I decided to carry it up through the various scaffolds and floor framing so it could be placed in the correct location. I don't remember exactly how we

Stair intersection with main floor

did it, but was able to get a couple of friends to help, fortunately. All we had to do was climb 30 feet in the tree over a 40 foot drop threading a 13 foot 120 pound



Post extension

Floor framing

First step of ladder

ladder through torturous turns and tight spaces. I guess I had become acclimatized to the heights and danger, little by little so to me it was just another day at work but to my friends it felt very dangerous and they wanted to stop half way through the process. After the ordeal was over, my helpers wished me luck and beat it out of there saying they wanted no more part of helping me.

**A**t this point, I still had not the a vaguest concept how I was going to build my house, . I now had the floor framed in with a ladder up to it, so I covered it with rough temporary planking I would later replace with a finished floor. Once this stable flooring was in place, I invited my wife to have dinner up in the tree. She made a special meal and purchased a bottle of wine. She brought steaming delights all the way from our hillside camp up to the new floor at 6:30 on a warm sunny July evening. We were both very happy with what I had accomplished so far. She admitted that she hadn't been sure that I would actually do it but she was proud of my achievement. Sitting cross-legged on our hard won perch, we thoroughly enjoyed the golden end to a beau-



*It doesn't get any better than this thirty feet up in the wild cherry, as the sun sets and we finish off the last of the white wine!*

tiful summer day, high above the fields and farms. We ate the wonderful meal among the shimmering green leaves as the setting sun filtered through, enhancing the beauty of the view. In the pleasure of the moment, we began to plan our new house while the birds above us added their songs to dreams of a happy home.





