This photo of the packaged HalfSquare antenna was also shot only minutes before installation. The skywire proved to be very good for long-haul DXing.

a mountaintop retreat. My QTH is a flat-ground neighborhood complete with nearby houses, cars, and trees.) If I can do it, so can you!

Overall, the Sparky is a low-profile and sharp-performing antenna you can install almost anywhere. It can be hung from a motel window or balcony, sloped to a tree, or even hidden inside a PVC pipe used to support a flag on your porch. You will really like the Sparky if you do not have a beam for direct side-by-side comparisons. My 12 meter version could only be compared with a ¼-wave ground-mounted vertical, for example, and the Sparky was significantly better. I am not convinced the Sparky is the greatest thing since sliced bread, but it will make me think long and hard before using another ground-mounted vertical. The Sparky is an impressive antenna!

The QRV HalfSquare Antenna

Antennas West refers to this skywire as a good choice for long-haul DXing when a tower and beam are not feasible, and that description seems pretty much on target. The antenna, shown packaged in the photo and outlined in fig. 1, consists of two vertical wire radiators separated and connected by a half-wave "open-air" phasing line. It requires two supports similar to a dipole, but its performance and radiation patterns are quite different.

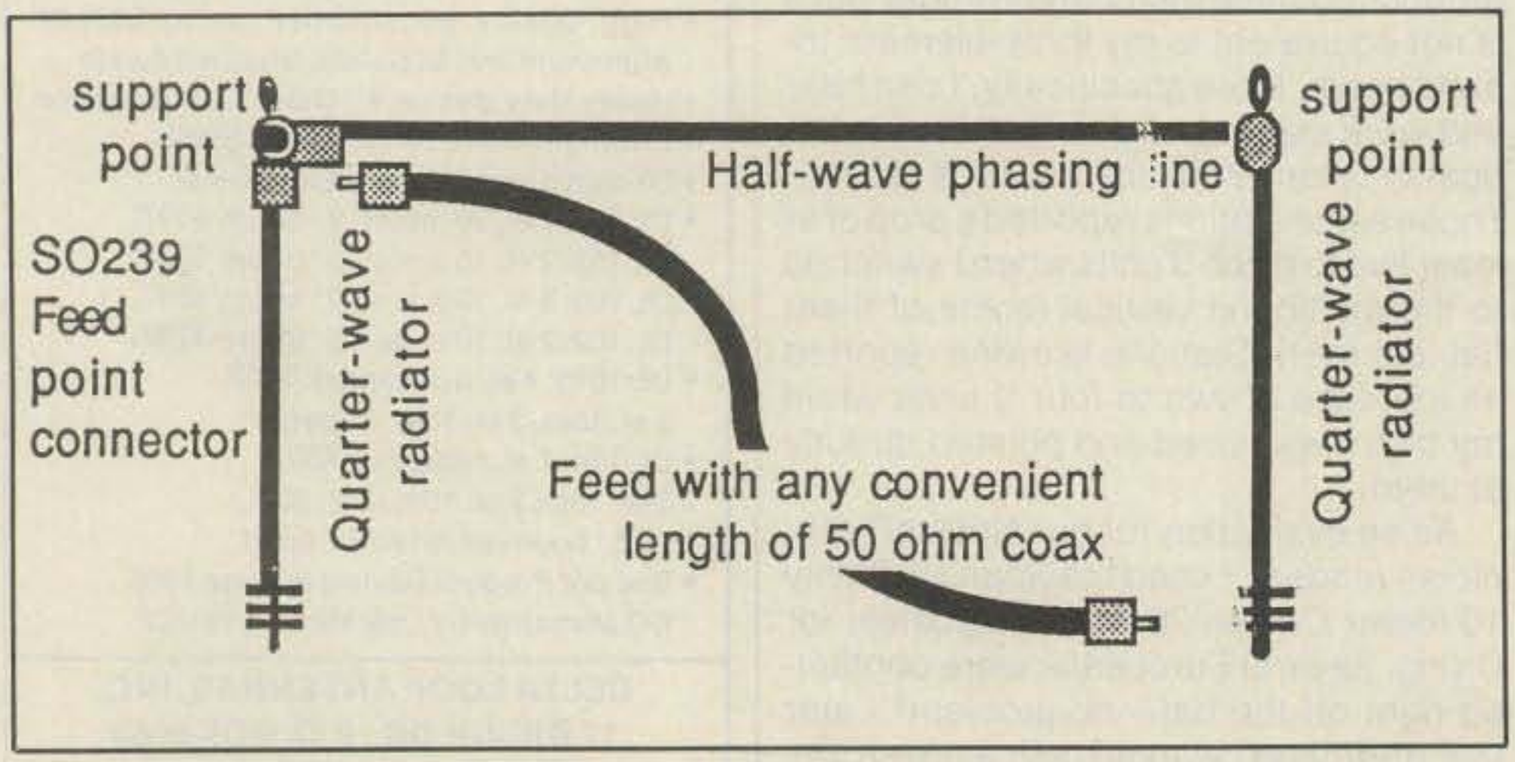

Fig. 1 - This sketch illustrates a typical HalfSquare installation.

The HalfSquare operates like an upside-down pair of phase verticals, with its top phasing line eliminating grounding requirements. The antenna exhibits a broadside gain of several dB, with a noticeable null off its ends and maximum signal radiation at a low-to-the-horizon angle for DXing. Unlike many horizontal-type wire antennas, the HalfSquare performs well at relatively low heights. This antenna is mainly attractive for DXing. However, a dipole or Sparky will definitely beat it for stateside QSOs. Conversely, the HalfSquare minimizes U.S. QRM when serious DXing is your preference.

This neat antenna also proved to be a breeze to install. I merely "quick launched" a pull-up rope over two tree limbs, attached the antenna, let its vertical sides dangle, and it was ready for operation.

Performance of the HalfSquare reminded me of phased Sparkys, if you can visualize that analogy. My beam still beat the HalfSquare, but the margin of difference was surprisingly close. My ground-mounted vertical was no comparison. It is amazing what can be accomplished with a hank of wire. This antenna's accompanying 40-page booklet also describes many clever ways to mount it and use nearby objects as signal reflectors. Can you visualize using one of these gems on 40 or 80 meters? Wow!

Vacation Bound?

Antennas West also sells a neat quick-install Slinky® antenna for use in motels and apartments. Just stick a couple of suction cups on the wall, thread two Slinkys® with their support line between them, clip on coax, and you are ready for operation. The Slinky® antenna is 15 feet long and works 40 through 10 meters. This antenna begs for creative experimentation. I am presently using two Slinkys® to build a 2 ½ foot square by 4 foot long 10 meter quad. You can probably visualize even more and better designs.

Conclusion

Considering today's cost of single-purchased components, the time involved in antenna assembly, and the benefits of purchasing ready-to-install skywires, Antennas West's goodies are a logical solution. Their manuals are also very good instructors. One explains the finer points of wire selection (like how stranded copper wire corrodes, its strands rub, and noisy reception results). Another booklet describes time-proven fast and effective methods of antenna installation. Check with Antennas West the next time you need a special radiator for home or portable use. You will like the results.

For more product information, contact Antennas West, Box 50062-S, Provo, UT 84605 (telephone 801-373-8425). CQ