

The Portable Hustler

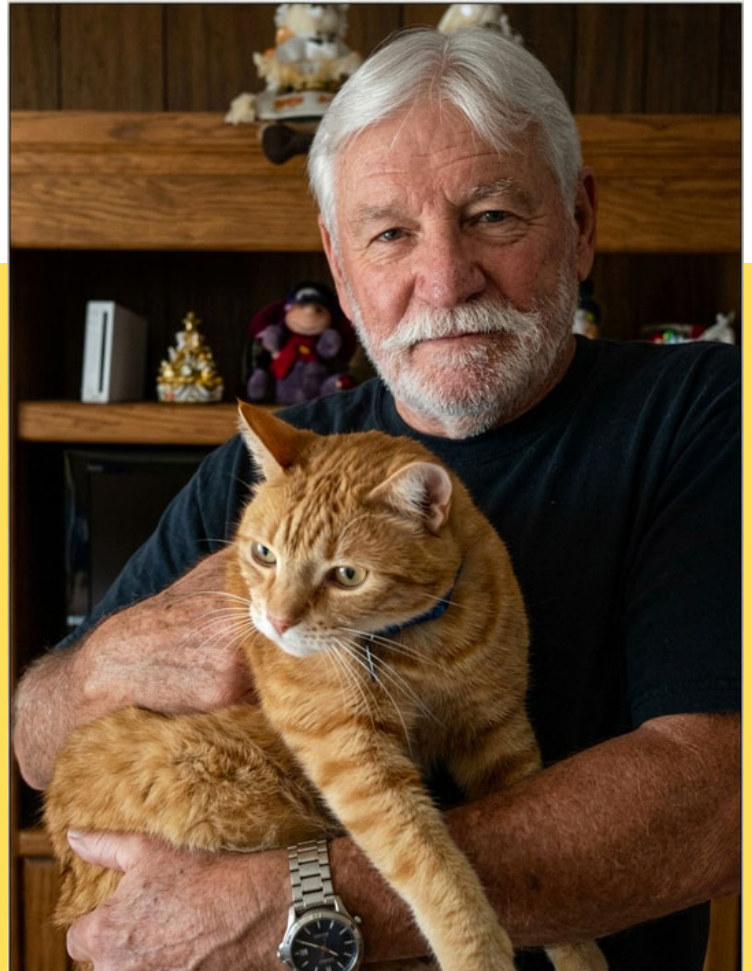
A Simple QRP Antenna and an Unforgettable Experience from Aruba

By: Mike Zane N6ZW

Article prepared for SWR Magazine based on original notes, diagrams, and material provided by the author.

There is something special about portable operations.

I am not referring to the kind of activity that requires elaborate towers, heavy equipment, or complex installations, but rather that simple and practical operation that allows a radio amateur to reach a new location, set up a station in a few minutes, and get on the air using the available space.





Made with ribbon type cable, they formed the heart of the system. The entire setup could be assembled quickly and adapted to balconies, railings, or temporary installations.

According to Mike's original notes, the antenna could be easily secured using clamps, plastic ties, wire, or even tape, depending on the situation. The goal was not elegance, but portability and functionality.

And it worked.

During his trip to Aruba, Mike operated using the callsign P40Z and quickly discovered that a QRP contest was taking place. While listening to the stronger stations calling CQ, he decided to reduce his power and participate using only five watts.

"The callsign P40Z definitely added a few dB to the signal."

— Mike Zane, N6ZW

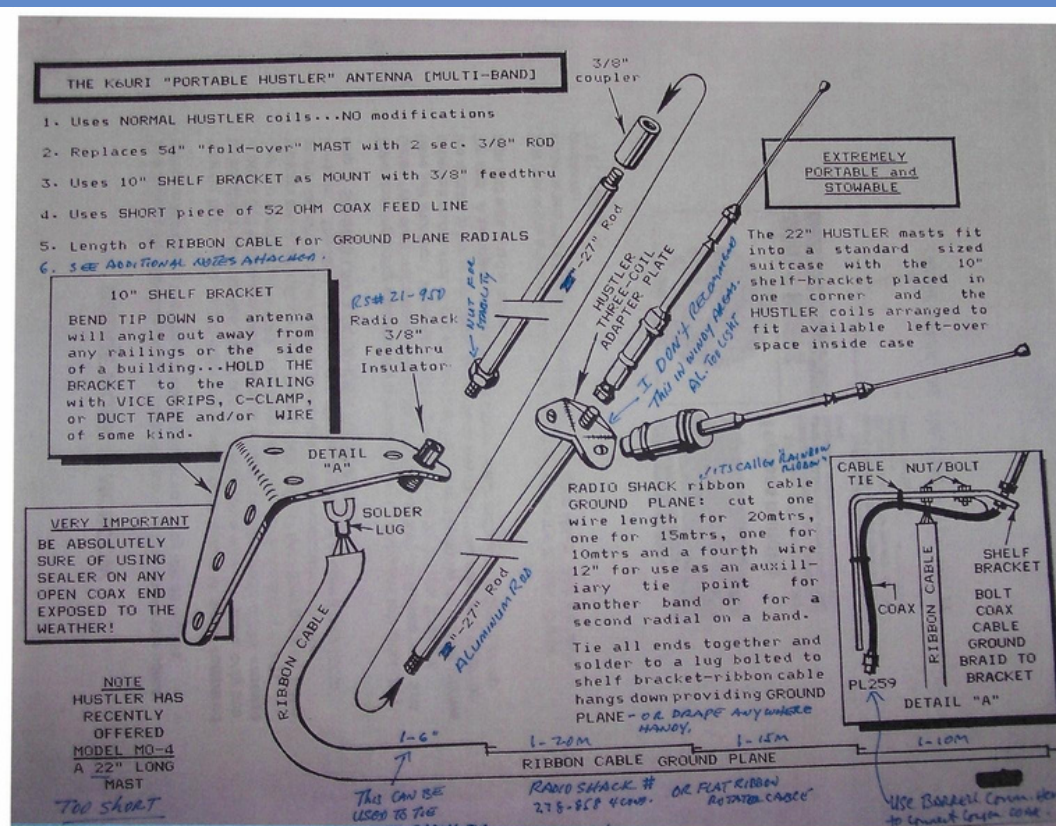
For Mike Zane, one of those moments occurred during a trip to Aruba in the early 1990s.

Mike brought with him a compact multiband portable antenna system based on standard Hustler coils and a lightweight mast setup designed specifically for travel. The idea was simple: to create an HF system that could fit into a standard suitcase while still delivering effective performance in real portable operations.

The result was what Mike called the "Portable Hustler."

What made this project particularly interesting was its simplicity. The antenna used standard Hustler components with no modifications to the coils. A short mast section, a compact mount, a small length of coaxial cable, and radials.

Operating from the balcony shown in the photographs, Mike used the portable system to make contacts from the island, enjoying the flexibility that only amateur radio can offer. The compact setup proved especially useful in temporary installations where space and transportation were important factors.



The original antenna diagram, reproduced from Mike's files, reflects the practical experimentation so familiar to many amateur radio operators. The handwritten notes, improvised modifications, and adjustments born from field experience tell the story of a system refined through real use rather than theory.

The system used standard Hustler resonators mounted on a portable mast, with ribbon cable radials acting as a ground plane. The design emphasized low weight, ease of transport, and quick deployment while still maintaining multiband capability.

One of the most ingenious aspects of the system was its ability to be efficiently stored inside a standard suitcase. Mike's notes mention how the Hustler coils were arranged

around the remaining space, while the mast sections and hardware occupied very little room.

For traveling amateur radio operators, especially in an era before modern ultralight HF equipment, solutions like this represented the creativity and ingenuity that have always characterized amateur radio.

Today, decades later, the photographs and diagrams continue to capture that same spirit: an operator adapting to the environment, experimenting with available materials, and finding a way to get on the air from virtually anywhere.

And perhaps that is exactly what makes the "Portable Hustler" more than just an antenna project.

It is a reminder that some of the best amateur radio experiences begin with little more than a suitcase, a few watts, and the willingness to try.



Main Features of the Antenna

- Uses standard Hustler coils.
- No modifications required on the coils.
- Designed for multiband operation.
- Compact enough to fit inside a suitcase.
- Radial system made with ribbon type cable.
- Ideal for balconies and temporary installations.
- Lightweight and designed for portable QRP operation.

One of the most ingenious aspects of the system was its ability to be efficiently stored inside a standard suitcase. Mike's notes

In addition to the main features already mentioned, the Portable Hustler offers a series of technical and practical advantages that make it an excellent option for the traveling amateur radio operator:

P 4 O Z
K6URI

QSO WITH	CONFIRMING QSO				
	DATE	UTC	RST	MHz	MODE

☐ Pse ☐ QSL ☐ Tnx ☐

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Operational photographs from Aruba and the original QSL card for P40Z associated with Mike's portable operations.

About the Author

Mike Zane has been a licensed amateur radio operator since 1956. His interest in radio began with crystal receivers and later led him to serve in the U.S. Army Security Agency, specializing in Morse code interception and direction finding. After 25 years of service with the Lodi Police Department, Mike continued to pursue amateur radio along with his passion for writing.

THE K6URI "PORTABLE HUSTLER" ANTENNA [MULTI-BAND]

1. Uses NORMAL HUSTLER coils...NO modifications
2. Replaces 54" "fold-over" MAST with 2 sec. 3/8" ROD
3. Uses 10" SHELF BRACKET as MOUNT with 3/8" feedthru
4. Uses SHORT piece of 52 OHM COAX FEED LINE
5. Length of RIBBON CABLE for GROUND PLANE RADIALS
6. SEE ADDITIONAL NOTES ATTACHED.

10" SHELF BRACKET

BEND TIP DOWN so antenna will angle out away from any railings or the side of a building...HOLD THE BRACKET to the RAILING with VICE GRIPS, C-CLAMP, or DUCT TAPE and/or WIRE of some kind.

RS# 21-950
Radio Shack
3/8" Feedthru Insulator

VERY IMPORTANT

BE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF USING SEALER ON ANY OPEN COAX END EXPOSED TO THE WEATHER!

NOTE
HUSTLER HAS RECENTLY OFFERED MODEL MO-4 A 22" LONG MAST

TOO SHORT

3/8" coupler

EXTREMELY PORTABLE and STOWABLE

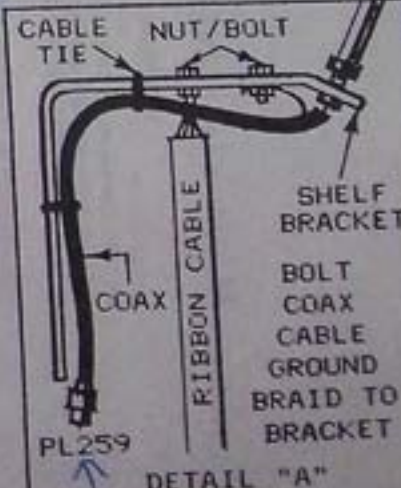
The 22" HUSTLER masts fit into a standard sized suitcase with the 10" shelf-bracket placed in one corner and the HUSTLER coils arranged to fit available left-over space inside case

RADIO SHACK ribbon cable GROUND PLANE: cut one wire length for 20mtrs, one for 15mtrs, one for 10mtrs and a fourth wire 12" for use as an auxiliary tie point for another band or for a second radial on a band.

Tie all ends together and solder to a lug bolted to shelf bracket-ribbon cable hangs down providing GROUND PLANE - OR DRAPE ANYWHERE HANDY.

RIBBON CABLE GROUND PLANE

RADIO SHACK # 275-950 4cm. OR FEA RIBBON ANTENNA CABLE



THIS CAN BE USED TO TIE

USE Barrel Connector to connect Coax cable



