
One Last Compile...

Me, Bill and socks

I make no claim to being consistent in these columns. It's just too difficult. When deadlines loom, and the Editor is gently reminding you that he knows where your children go to school, any illusions about maintaining a consistent, coherent outlook on Delphi matters are quickly abandoned.

I say this by way of warning that I am about to wax lyrical about writing components. In the past I have been less than complimentary about this mainly because I find designing bitmaps for them depressingly difficult and because I invariably end up with all my packages complaining that they are all now deeply intertwined and aren't going to compile until I sort it all out.

But now I have written a component which I am so in love with that I can't help telling you about it. But, before you ask, it will never make it out there into the Delphi community, for three reasons. Firstly, it's very specific to the database structure that we use. Secondly, I would worry, as I do with everything that I do with Delphi, that it simply wouldn't stand up to public scrutiny. If I were to stand up in front of, say, the Borland User Group, and outline what I'd done, I fear I would be trampled underfoot by developers wishing to point out that I'd made several major architectural errors and my whole premise is fundamentally flawed anyway. When something works, it is

sometimes better to remain in ignorance. It's certainly better for the ego.

And the third reason? Well, the third reason is that it's so pathetically simple that it's embarrassing to tell you what it does. You may be thinking, given the build-up I've given it, that I've written some kind of whizzy new grid. Or a new-fangled list box? Something which digs deep into the innards of Delphi and reports the status of all sorts of bizarre internal variables? No, not my style at all. For one thing, visual components still make me nervous. There's something about `Canvases` and `OwnerDraw` properties that makes me go all faint, and me digging around in the Delphi innards is about as likely as me writing a program in Latvian Assembler code.

All it is, quite simply, is a descendant of `TQuery`. What's more, it has no new properties at all. What it does have, by the hundred, is lots of routines embedded in it to automatically load up SQL and execute it. So I simply write something like

```
MyBrillComponent.AddCompany(  
    'Widgit Inc')
```

and it will pop along and get a new company code, write the insert statement and report back on what it's done.

Every time I find myself writing any SQL (and, believe me, in the last six months I've written a lot of

SQL) I wonder if there's any value in putting it in my component instead. The answer, nine times out of ten, is 'yes'. And so my little library grows and grows and, now, whenever I start a new form, I can simply pop down a copy and have it all at my disposal.

Nor is this a triumph I have shared alone. My Delphi colleagues all use it and add to it (at which point may I just say hurrah for TeamSource). We chuckle happily every time it comes to the rescue. 'How do I do X?' somebody will mutter darkly, and one of us will usually pipe up that we put it in the component only last week. An air of happy smugness will then descend, and we return contentedly to our perusing of *Computer Weekly*. We love (and I mean love) this component. We even took the trouble to find an icon for it, a picture of a guy's face from the DIL disc who looks a bit like Shaggy from Scooby Doo. We call him 'Bill', which I'm sorry to report makes us chuckle even more.

Like I said, a simple idea and not at all ground-breaking. But it's a good example of how Delphi can suddenly make your programming life seem so much more simple and straightforward. It's things like this that make you feel all warm and at one with the Delphi spirit and its community, and you get a sudden urge to send Christmas cards and pairs of socks to all the Delphi team. Then you remember Christmas is months away, and they'd probably think you were a kind of mad stalker. And speaking of which, I'd better run. I've got to collect my kids from school before the Editor gets there.