

# One Last Compile...

*Thanks to Delphi, you may never have to visit your kitchen again*

I've never been sure whether I prefer real life or digital life. In the last few months I've spent so much time beavering away in the latter that I suspect my grip on the former, always tenuous, may be growing ever looser. You become so used to a way of working and problem solving that your mind tends to suggest similar solutions to everything, even when they're inappropriate or downright silly.

As an introduction, consider pointers. In Delphi it's very handy to be able to access the same object from different forms and units by passing pointers. In fact, since I discovered them, they've become my favourite programming tool and I can't imagine how I got along without them. This is probably highly illegal and I'm not saying I fully understand them or that I use them correctly. In time I will probably disown them completely. (It's an accepted part of programming life that your blood runs cold when you look at code you wrote six months ago.) Until then, I think they're great.

My enthusiasm for pointers would be even greater if there was a real world equivalent. This occurred to me as I lay in bed the other morning, very thirsty but with my usual reluctance to expend unnecessary energy. The kitchen, with its nice bottles of ice-cold milk and cartons of orange juice, seemed a long way away. What I needed, I thought drowsily, was a pointer to the fridge passed from the kitchen to my bedroom. That would be neat. In fact, while I was about it, why not pass a pointer to the fridge to every room in the house? Then I could always get a drink, no matter where I was. It wouldn't even matter if somebody tried to trick me by moving the fridge to another location, like the bathroom. I would always be only a function call away from

ice-cold refreshment. Throw in a pointer to the cooker and the washing machine, and I need never visit my kitchen again.

This was such a cool idea that I was astonished nobody had thought of it before. I was clearly going to become very rich, although perhaps not hugely popular with people who designed kitchens. If only I had time to develop it. But, I muttered to myself, my boss would never allow me the time to do it. He'd always be popping up with something new for me to do.

Then I had my second brainstorm of the morning. I would simply comment out my boss. After all, that's what you do when you want to focus on just one thing. Comment out everything else, and just concentrate on the important bit. My boss would still be there, and I would still be able to see him (albeit in a rather unnerving blue italic), but once he had a pair of curly brackets around him I'd be free to get on with my work.

It was really quite disappointing when I woke up properly and realised that the `TFridge` object was still firmly located downstairs. Life would have to go on without the aid of coding and debugging tools. When talking to girls I wouldn't be able to insert a breakpoint to help me identify precisely the moment at which their eyes begin to glaze over. I wouldn't be able to put a watch on the photocopier paper tray so that I could track down and shoot people who didn't refill it. Saddest of all, I wouldn't be able to use the Call Stack to track down the person who sends me a Valentine's Day Card every year, although, between you and me, I have a sneaking suspicion it's my mum.