

One Last Compile...

Delphi and the Beautiful People

(Come on you pathetic excuse of a columnist! You're late with your copy again! This is your final warning: one more missed deadline and we're going to replace you with Jerry Pournelle.

I've just had to reinstall NT for the fifth time in a fortnight. I'm not feeling inspired, or funny, or even moderately entertaining.

That's never stopped you before. Just do the usual: write about what a pathetic, miserable, uninteresting life you have and how terrible you are at writing software. Or make something up: try and make yourself sound interesting and glamorous. But our readers are a sceptical bunch: don't stretch their credibility too far.)

I bumped into Winona Ryder at the last Borland User Group meeting. We chatted for a while about a variety of things: the irritation of the ImageList bug in Delphi 4 (she uses a lot of ImageLists, so it's a big issue for her); which was the best reporting tool (Crystal Reports got Winona's vote, but I loyally held out for ReportBuilder); and the issues involved in deploying ActiveForms across an intranet. I was able to help her with an algorithm for a particularly tricky search routine she wanted to write, and she promised to send me a very slick *Tip of the Day* component that she'd found in one of the newsgroups.

'Your beard's looking lovely,' said Winona admiringly. 'And I just love your stripy sweater. Is it new?'

We talked briefly about sartorial matters, it's a dull fish indeed who only thinks of programming, before Winona looked at her watch, squeaked charmingly, and said she had to rush back for a meeting with the testing department. So I turned my attentions to the refreshments.

I'd only just had time for a custard cream when Quentin Tarantino wandered over and

asked if I could give him a few tips on using OLE to automate Word and Excel. He wanted to use them to generate reports and charts for his users.

'And what about your users who don't have Microsoft Office, Quentin?' I said sternly. 'What are they going to do?' Quentin looked sheepish, and muttered something about most people had Microsoft Office anyway, so what was the harm?

'That's just the kind of thinking that Microsoft want,' I said irritably. 'If the rest of us are pushing our users towards Microsoft products, how can we expect competition to flourish? I know it makes life easier to assume everybody's got Microsoft Office, but in the long run it's not in the best interests of the industry. Do try and look at the bigger picture, Quentin.'

Quentin sulkily promised to come up with another approach, and then wandered off to go and sit on his own in a corner. I wondered sadly why it was that film directors so rarely made good Delphi programmers. A little too frivolous in

their approach, perhaps? Mind you, David Lean had been pretty handy with Turbo Pascal in his later years, and Steven Spielberg has turned out a couple of very solid, if unoriginal, components, so maybe it's still too early to judge Quentin.

It was nearly time for the next session to start, and I looked around for somewhere to sit. There was a space next to Cher, who I thought was highly inappropriately dressed for a winter's day in Hammersmith, but I kept my own counsel. I'm quite a sensitive soul, and I know that women can sometimes be surprisingly touchy. Michele Pfeiffer once threw a rock bun at me after I pointed out a dangling pointer, so I decided not to say anything. Much more of a concern was the fact that Cher kept flirting with me and playing footsie, and I couldn't concentrate on what the speaker was saying about optimising Interbase's SQL performance over a wide-area network. In the end I had to turn to her and ask her in a loud voice to stop, and she went very red and went and sat next to Ewan McGregor.

(Thanks for the idea boss. I think that turned out quite well, don't you?)

Next issue: Jerry Pournelle and what's new at Chaos Manor.