



Inprise/Borland Conference Report

It's all about the community

by Bob Swart

I'm just back from Philadelphia, where I attended, and participated in, the 1999 Inprise/Borland Conference, now in its 10th year.

The conference started with the usual pre-conference tutorials: a good way to get started, with topics on Delphi, JBuilder, VisiBroker (CORBA) etc. It sure seems that more and more people are attending these pre-conference events each year. I estimated almost 1,000 developers at the Sunday lunch at (the total number of conference visitors was said to be around 3,500).

Everyone was present at the Opening Keynote, where David I entered the stage giving a guitar solo à la Mark Knopfler! However, when David introduced CEO Dale Fuller, something appeared to go wrong, as Dale did not appear on stage. Trying to save some time by opening the floor to some Q and A, David received a question from someone in the audience who wondered about *Borland, Commitment* and the *Community*. Of course, this person was Dale Fuller himself, who quickly made it to the stage to open conference. Dale returned to the topic of Borland and the community, and he apologised (on behalf of the whole of Inprise) for

the mis-management of previous CEOs. Dale Fuller is a relatively young CEO, who appears to have a feeling for developers, especially the Borland developer community (he used that phrase a lot). He outlined three important rules:

1. *Developers Rule!*
2. *Speed Rules!*
3. *Responsibility Rules!*

and explained how each of these rules would affect Borland, the new Borland.

Dale apologised again for the way Inprise tried to move away from its loyal customer base. Borland has learned from that, and will not make that same mistake again.

Yes, Borland is truly back, and Inprise is still here (in practice, the company is still being called Inprise, but the Borland brand name is being brought back to the fore).

There are three important concepts for Borland, according to Fuller: quality, consistency and innovation. Dale mentioned those and also focused on JBuilder (which will have Solaris and Linux versions) and Delphi (for which the investment is promised to double!). He even (almost) mentioned something like 'Delphi for Linux', but promised more on these topics on Wednesday, during the Technology Keynote. It was a bit surprising that he didn't *once* mention C++Builder or InterBase: when someone asked explicitly, Dale said that we had a beta of InterBase 6 in our conference bag.

Finally, some awards were given away, including a lifetime achievement award to David I, who was also named Vice President of the new 'Borland.com and Beyond' online community. Congratulations David! You deserve it! (hope

this doesn't mean your programming days are over, or you have to shave now).

On Monday, during the Delphi product address, delegates could witness the official launch of



Delphi 5. Not truly unexpected, of course, given the fact that the conference also featured at least six or seven sessions on Delphi 5.

Delegates could choose from almost 300 sessions, the most popular being about Delphi and JBuilder (as I expected). The level of the sessions was generally somewhere between beginner and intermediate, with a few advanced sessions here and there (or maybe that's just my opinion). I did hear a few complaints from people who didn't want to listen to beginners material every time, and were not ready for in-depth stuff, but wanted to have some truly intermediate coverage. Although you can't satisfy all of the people all of the time, I do believe the conference contained something useful for everyone. Even if not the sessions (for everyone), then at least the computer lab or the exhibition contained enough food for thought to keep occupied for days.

The 'Delphi Meet The Team' session started with the announcement that yours truly, Bob Swart,

Picture taken by Joop Pecht of SDGN



and Marco Cantù, have jointly won the 1999 *Spirit of Delphi* award. On behalf of both Marco and myself, I'd like to thank everyone for their support. We truly appreciate this.

During the 'Meet The Team' session, a number of (informal) questions were asked by the audience regarding the future of Delphi. People again asked about Delphi for Linux, and were (again) pointed to the technology keynote on Wednesday.

At the Delphi party, later that night, I had a chance to have a (short) word with Dale Fuller and I must say he certainly is different from the other Borland CEOs I've met. Let's hope that it's not just words, but actions too. But, as Dale said himself, he probably would have problems believing all this himself: let's wait and see.

Also at the Delphi party, delegates received a free 60-day trial edition of Delphi 5. Actually, that's FT4 of Delphi 5, so we should expect it to be 'somewhat less than perfect' at this time. Yet, it's certainly a great thing to have, and I bet a lot of people are very sorry now that they missed the conference. What can I say? *You had to be there!*

Of course, I didn't get much sleep that night. I spent *far* too much time playing with the pre-release version of Delphi 5. There are some great improvements. I just love the new data module designer. Words cannot express how great it is to write code and draw your relational database design at the same time. And to be able to print it, even to a metafile, for inclusion in your documentation. And the data module



Picture taken by Joop Pecht of SDGN

designer also works with 'derived' data modules, of course, such as remote data modules, web modules, and so on. It's just great!

Wednesday was the last day of the conference. The technology keynote was all focused on Linux, and Inprise tools for Linux. The first one to show was InterBase, which is already shipping for Linux. Then, Michael Swindell shared the results of the Linux Survey (so far). Most people want to see a Delphi for Linux or a C++Builder for Linux. And about 70% want a true IDE, instead of a command line compiler. We also heard that Borland has just finished ported its back-end compiler to Linux. This compiler is shared by Delphi and C++Builder, so it opens up the real possibility of a Borland C++Builder or Delphi for Linux.

A demonstration was given of the Borland C++ command line compiler for Linux, compiling a computer game (and doing it faster than the regular Linux C++ compiler of course). At the end of this keynote, another demo of the 100% 'nothing but Java' version of JBuilder, code-named PrimeTime, was shown on Windows, Solaris and Linux.

It was a bit disappointing to see nothing but the command line back-end compiler (and then just the old Borland C++ version), and nothing specific for Delphi. Oh well, I didn't really think there would be a Delphi for Linux. Not this year anyway. But it's good to know that JBuilder is leading the way.

All in all, this 10th annual Borland Conference was an

event not to be missed. As always, I've enjoyed myself and learned a lot. And I'm 100% sure I'll be back next year. Who knows, maybe we'll see Delphi 6, and Delphi for Linux, by that time..

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Joop Pecht of the SDGN (www.sdgn.nl) for his permission to use the photos he took at BorCon99.

Bob Swart (aka Dr.Bob, visit www.drbob42.com, email Bob at drbob@chello.nl) is a technical consultant and webmaster for TAS Advanced Technologies using Delphi, JBuilder and C++Builder, freelance technical author, and co-author of *Delphi 4 Unleashed* and *C++Builder 4 Unleashed*.

