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Software Legends, part 1

From Real-Time to Prime-Time

In the first part of the codezone series "Software Legends" you can read all about the career of VB Guru JACKIE GOLDSTEIN – according to the master himself.



It was 1993 and I was following a rather conventional path. I had degrees in Electrical Engineering but wasn't too crazy about math, so I had been spending the past ten years developing embedded, real-time software for various companies. In some ways, though, I was getting tired of it and I decided to get into Windows programming. Like all good C programmers wanting to learn Windows programming, I purchased a copy of Petzold's "Programming Windows 3.1" and started coding. I even found someone willing to pay me to develop a set of thematic screen savers.

The summer rolled around, I delivered the screen savers, and I was really getting into this new (to me) Windows stuff. In speaking to friends and colleagues, who were more experienced Windows developers, I heard about this new Microsoft tool called Visual Basic. I was sceptical, but I believe the exact phrase that most convinced me was "It really is the best thing since sliced bread." Visual Basic 3.0 had recently been released and I went out and bought it, together with Access 2.0.

It didn't take long before I was hooked. For the next several years, I spent almost every single working day sitting with VB and Access. I never developed applications in Access, I just used it as my database development and testing tool. I worked on many different interesting projects and less than a year later I was writing a regular VB column for a local Windows developer magazine. Don't forget that these were still the days when VB developers were not considered "real" programmers!

Soon thereafter, I began developing a closer and closer relationship with the local Microsoft office. I became their VB Guru and was giving presentations at almost every local Microsoft developer event. Beginning with VB4, I have been closely involved in the launch of every version of Visual Basic / Visual Studio, being the first to show and explain to the local developer community the latest features of each new release. I also founded and continue to organize and host the monthly meetings of the IV-BUG (Israel Visual Basic User Group).

In 1996, my relationship with Microsoft became somewhat more formalized. In recognition of my technical expertise and involvement in the developer community, I was appointed the Microsoft Regional Director for Israel. Regional Directors are indi-

vidual Microsoft partners, who are specialists in the area of development tools and technologies. In 1999, I was awarded International Regional Director of the Year.

As I look back on the wide variety of projects that I developed with VB, I think that one in particular stands out. This is probably due to the fact that it was not only a "cool" project, but also because it generally elicits incredulous comments like "You really did that in VB?!" The project was to provide a development environment, an IDE if you will, for developing robotic programs. This system allows developers to quickly and easily create advanced robot processing applications, including coding, compiling the robot language to the controller "machine code", downloading the code to the robot controller, and interactive, real-time debugging. And yes, except for 4 routines written in C (2 for system hooks and 2 checksum routines that were just copied and pasted from the controller's software), it was all written in Visual Basic!

Nowadays, I still do almost all of my development, training, and consulting in Visual Basic. However, developing applications today demands that I am fluent in many other languages and technologies – and .NET makes this very easy. I wrote a book on VB.NET and database access and I have been traveling all around the world consulting, training and speaking at developer conferences. I am sure that VB.NET will keep me busy for many years to come.

Visual Basic and I have come a long way together. We have had our challenges and we have both grown in our own ways. I have made friends, I have made money, and I have had a lot of fun.

YES, VISUAL BASIC HAS BEEN VERY, VERY GOOD TO ME.