Thanks for your responses about widgets. I implemented the COMMON block as
suggested. I do not understand the suggestion about using a structure
instead of a COMMON, however. Also, I think that I did not state my
original problem clearly.

I am creating the widget from my main IDl code, with the line
 XMANAGER,/JUST_REG,'name',id
in the procedure that builds the widget.

By using the COMMON block, I can now sense and desense the widgets via
 WIDGET_CONTROL,id,sensi=1

But if I then use XMANAGER,'name',id, control passes to the widget,
but how do I then transfer back to $MAIN$ (or the calling procedure)
after I make my selection?
(I also want to have the current values stored in the widget text
fields available in $MAIN$).

I noticed that if I just use WIDGET_EVENT in the procedure that builds
the widget, I can grab the event and continue on in $MAIN$, but I am
then limited to making a selection immediately after the widget is
built, and rebuilding after every slection isn't very elegant! The IDL
manual (with its infinite wisdom!) says "widget applications should always
use XMANAGER in preference to calling WIDGET_EVENT directly". OK, good,
but how do I grab the event and return to $MAIN$?

Thanks for your time, and I would appreciate any further help.

Your fellow IDL fanatic,
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