
Subject: IDL on Windows vs. Unix, debugging consideration

Posted by [MKatz843](#) on Thu, 05 Aug 2004 17:19:39 GMT

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I'm not meaning to start a flame war of any kind (well okay maybe just a little one), but I came across an interesting bug (in my own IDL code) that occurred while running on Windows, but which I could only diagnose on Unix. I'm sharing this to get some constructive discussion going on debugging techniques.

I was working with an object class "MainClass" that has a typical GetProperty method. Since there are a number of smaller object classes that it inherits, the GetProperty routine is written in a way that passes along the _Ref_Extra keywords to the individual GetProperty methods of the inherited classes. All pretty standard stuff.

When running my program on Windows, I discovered that at the moment the GetProperty is called on a MainClass object -- whammo! -- the whole machine locks up into a massive endless loop. IDL has to be killed from the Task Manager, and you don't get to see where the problem was. I did notice that not a single line of the GetProperty methods of the inherited classes is ever called.

I do all of my development on Unix (Apple) and then run experiments on a Windows machine. So I took my problem back to the Mac and found it immediately. When the Mac entered the same endless loop I simply hit control-C and it broke at the offending line. It seems that an unrelated object class, "OtherClass", had been defined with a MainClass::GetProperty method due to a shoddy copy-and-paste job on my part. So the error message looked like (approximately):

```
Execution halted in MainClass::GetProperty in library
OtherClass__Define.pro  (aha!)
```

So thank goodness for the control-C in Unix. What do Windows IDL programmers do when the mouse cursor disappears, and the IDL window becomes unresponsive? -- Besides "End Task"?

I also wrestle with the issue that every time I have to close and re-launch IDLDE on Windows I have to re-open all of the program libraries I was just working with. It's a time-consuming pain. But in Unix (where I don't use IDLDE) I just keep all of the text editor windows open and running in a different application (BBEdit on Mac). Is there a Windows setting for this I'm unaware of.

Thanks for the tips.

M. Katz
