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Come to DevCon

The 10th FoxPro Developer's Conference is your chance to learn something new, improve existing skills and meet other developers.

By Tamar E. Granor, Editor

Do you wish you knew more about Visual FoxPro? About Visual Studio or Microsoft's DNA architecture? About OOP or object modeling? You're in luck. June 6 to 10 brings this year's Visual FoxPro Developers Conference (known far and wide as DevCon) at La Quinta Resort in Palm Springs, California.

Each of my last few columns included a few paragraphs about DevCon. I hope those tidbits, along with the brochure in the April issue, have already prompted you to sign up for the granddaddy of FoxPro conferences. Just in case you're still wavering, I want to give you a picture of what attending DevCon is like and tell you what's special about this DevCon.

Airline pricing policies mean most people arrive at DevCon on Saturday, although the conference doesn't officially begin until Sunday evening. From Saturday afternoon on, you can see warm reunions of old friends, surprised faces as online correspondents meet for the first time, and tentative approaches from those who don't know anyone, but recognize the fox head logo on shirts and computer bags.

By Sunday afternoon, the hotel lobby, bar, poolside area and conference center are overflowing with Fox programmers. Walking around, you can hear snatches of conversation ranging from "How's the family?" to "What are you working on now?" to "I have this problem with a query". Now and then, a laptop suddenly appears from a bag as an idea seems just too good to wait.

For those who prefer to start their formal learning right away, pre-conference sessions start Sunday morning. This year, there's a full-day introduction to VFP for newcomers (moving up from FoxPro 2.x or coming from other languages), as well as half-day sessions introducing Web technologies and SQL Server.

On Sunday evening, people pour into the ballroom to hear Microsoft's message at the keynote session. The reception following lets people discuss what they've heard and continue to build relationships with their peers. There's a range of talk from object-oriented design to sports to n-tier applications to food and back to computing. At the same time, the Trade Show opens and people wander around to see the latest versions of the tools of the trade, as well as take a look at the books on the market.

Later that night, the Jam Session begins. So many FoxPro folks are musicians (both amateur and professional) that the chance for people to play together is a DevCon institution. Bring your instrument or your voice, or just come to listen. If you prefer

acoustic music to electric, there's always an acoustic jam going on somewhere, too. Both Jam Sessions take place every night during the conference.

Monday morning, it's time to work as the regular sessions begin. This year, three topics aimed specifically at VFP newcomers and near-newcomers are offered Monday morning. These sessions, along with the Intro to VFP pre-conference course, are aimed at getting people up-to-speed so they're comfortable attending other sessions. As each session ends, attendees pour out, ready to talk about the new ideas they've just encountered.

Evenings feature more of the same. Whether there's a planned event or not, groups form, people rehash what they learned during the day and talk about what they're doing with VFP. At the same time, they get to know each other, forming the bonds that provide even the most solitary developer in the most remote location with a support group. Many people talk until the wee hours of the morning. Sleep is definitely not a priority.

The session list this year incorporates several new approaches. Contributing Editor Y. Alan Griver will spend one full day of sessions building a complete n-tier, Windows DNA application from idea to working code. (Think Julia Child here.) There'll also be a couple of "Ask the Experts" sessions followed by time in the computer lab with the same experts. In addition, in response to requests, some topics (like "Visual FoxPro and Modeling" and "Build a Client-Server Application with Visual FoxPro") are scheduled as double-length sessions. The long list of other topics includes titles such as "Pest Control for the Y2K Bug", "Using the Debugger Productively", "Building and Using COM Components with VFP" and "Distributed Internet Applications with Visual FoxPro", with plenty more to choose from. You'll find the full list of speakers and topics at http://www.advisor.com.

DevCon also features the announcement of the winners of the 1999 Visual FoxPro Excellence Awards. This is your opportunity to see and hear about some of most exciting VFP applications around.

DevCon '99 is the tenth FoxPro DevCon. The tradition started by Fox Software in 1989 lives on. We've been to Toledo (three times), Phoenix/Scottsdale (twice), Orlando (twice), San Diego (twice) and now Palm Springs. Whether you've been to them all, made it to just a few, or never attended a FoxPro conference before, plan to join us at La Quinta to learn, enjoy, find clients, find employees, make friends, and celebrate Visual FoxPro.