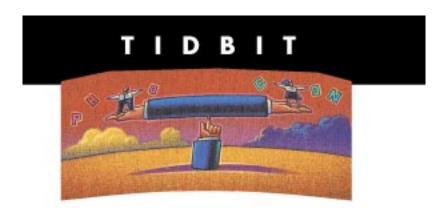
## The IDUG Solutions Journal Summer 2000 - Volume 7, Number 2



## **Upgrading Your Attachments**

## BY WILLIE FAVERO

Caught you thinking technical, didn't I? You should know better when reading this column. This is absolutely not about any of the DB2 attachments. It's about a more personal attachment. And, yes, you are wrong again. It is not about spouses, children, or friends. It's about something even more dear, and far more important, to our well being. Something that would drive us to a complete panic if we did not have immediate access to it.

While you think about where this is all heading, let's go back a few years -- something like 46 years to be exact. It was at about that time that I was dragging a small, ten-inch brown bear everywhere I went. My parents recently revealed to me that they were getting a little worried that I might never give up that little bear. However, by age eight, I had discovered baseball – my trusty bear was just a memory. Imagine getting nervous because a small piece of cloth stuffed with cotton (or whatever) might not be there for you.

Well, now jump back to the 21st century. Am I better off now? Not really! I may be heading for the same predicament now that I had back in 1955 – perhaps even worse. What new little security toy (or should I say toys) am I dragging with me every place I go? You have probably already figured it out. It is right there in my backpack: my notebook computer, cellular telephone, pager, and a plethora of other support devices. It is sad to admit, but some of us have become electronic junkies.

The leader on our list of electronic drugs is the notebook computer. 256 megabytes of

ram, 12 gigabytes of disk space, and an 11x8 color screen all packed into a 3.5 pound case. They are everywhere, carried by everybody. Think back to the last meeting, conference, or airplane flight you took. How many notebook computers did you see? How many times are you asked for your email address rather than your telephone number? At IDUG, attendees were in the back of the session rooms taking notes on their notebooks.

Go to any airport and you will see them everywhere. Everyone seems to be catching up on last minute work before the plane departs. Once a plane is airborne, when the flight attendant announces it is safe to use your electronics on the plane, notebooks pop up everywhere. I even carry an extra battery for my notebook -- just in case. Next time you are flying, and all those workaholics turn on their mobile PCs, try to see what business task they are performing. Yes, you will see an occasional WORD document or EXCEL spreadsheet, but soon you'll see a lot of solitaire and such. I even saw someone on a recent flight watching a flick on her notebook's DVD player. Now *there* is a great idea for a computer upgrade. I wonder how I justify that to my manager. But I digress.

This is all just the tip of the "security blanket" iceberg. You arrive at a hotel after a long flight. Do you think of food? Of course not. Your first thought is "I must get connected." Then, total panic. You realize the hotel room you just checked into has the phone jack on the left hand wall and the only stable flat surface is on the other side of the room. Truly trained travelers would be undisturbed by this. They simply reach into their suitcases, remove the 100 foot telephone cord they carry just in case, plug in and go to work. The fact is, many hotels will actually supply extra long telephone cords for just that purpose if you call the front desk. That is not the only complication one could run into when arriving at an unfamiliar hotel.

Occasionally a hotel will not have modular jacks or telephones with data jacks. Yes, they do still exist. Solution: carry a screw driver and modular jack with you. Of course, this should not happen very often any more. I think I have rewired them all by now.

The novice traveler may be perplexed when he ties up the telephone line, then discovers he has to make a telephone call. He doesn't want to disconnect or walk down to the lobby and use a pay phone. You have probably already figured out the solution. Always check into hotels with two line telephones. Actually, I am only half joking. The real solution lies in cellular telephones.

Cellular telephones are everywhere now. The entire world, from businesspeople to young kids, seems to be using them. I swore I would never be "one of them" but alas, I too have fallen into the phone web. I take my phone everywhere, although half the time I am too far from a cell tower and it doesn't work anyway. Although my phone is always within quick reach, I do not think I have become obsessive about it like many others. (Yet!) Just look around for the person that "appears" to be talking very loudly to himself. Look closely and you will notice the thin wire connecting his ear to his shirt pocket. There is that addiction to connection. Watch her fumble around with her phone, afraid to put it away on an airplane for fear she may miss that one, important call.

On a recent airline flight, the person in the window seat in our row was hiding a phone under a pillow. He was trying to complete a call "after the main cabin door was closed." Then, as soon as the wheels touch earth, he was back on his cell phone. This happened again, "before the main cabin door was open." I cannot even imagine having to be that connected. Some cellular telephone users manage to be so annoying. First off, many yell into their phones. In restaurants and airport waiting areas, you can hear half of the conversation probably as well as the poor person on the other end of the conversation. You hear all this from across a crowded room. I always hope their conversation was not supposed to be confidential. If that example is not annoying enough, here is an even better one. At a classical piano recital my daughters participated in a few weeks ago, with only about 30 people in attendance, a cell phone belonging to some guy in the last row went off. Ring, ring, ring, ring! He took the call in his seat, and spoke at "full volume." Finally, someone with far more intelligence asked him to step outside to complete his call.

If cellular phones are not bad enough, there are pagers. Pagers attach to our belts or park themselves in our bags so they can always be near. They are notifying us that someone needs us right a way. Way back when I was a system programmer (yes, I once had a real job two or three hundred years ago), I had to carry a pager. That thing drove me crazy. Somehow, that pager knew when I sat down to dinner in a restaurant or when I was someplace where I had absolutely no access to a telephone. Speaking of pagers going off at bad times brings up another subject. If someone is sitting through a one-hour presentation, can't her pager be put on silent mode or just turned off completely? After all, it's only for an hour. Of course, the pager is probably better than a cellular telephone ringing and the owner taking the phone call in the middle of the presentation. Yes, that has happened to me, but only once.

Pagers are fascinating little devices. They started out as just numeric. Then alphanumeric pagers arrived. Soon, you could reply to a page from the pager. Next came pagers with full keyboards that allowed you to message between pagers. This little feature came in handy at IDUG in Dallas. Made sure our entire group all ended up at the same restaurant. Finally, there is the PDA. I personally have a PalmPilot. The PDA allows one to stay completely connected. In fact, my PDA claims it can dial my cellular telephone from its address book. Sounds cool -- I just have not tried it yet. If you are collecting way too many toys, there are some cellular telephones that can also accept numeric and text pages. With all of these technical improvements, there is one thing that has puzzled me for quite some time. When did beepers, the little noisy thing I carried thirty years ago, become pagers? And why did they change the name? However, that really is off on a tangent, even for me. So let's get back on topic.

We should give special notice to the combo folks. They have a cellular telephone and a pager, sometimes multiples of both. I swear one guy was walking at a slant because of all the stuff clipped to his belt. I am guessing that he also had at least one notebook, maybe more, in his bag. For ultimate connectability, he could also have a PCMCIA card that is a combination modem and cellular device or maybe a cellular phone that allows a modem connection.

If you thought program loops were bad, wait until you become entangled in one of the wireless webs we sometimes weave ourselves. Here is an example. I have voice mail at work (big surprise). If you leave a message for me, voicemail sends me a page. The page identifies the voicemail telephone number so I know to call our voicemail system for the message. This I do on my cellular phone. I retrieve the message, and return the call probably using my cell phone. Of course, I could have just given out my cellular telephone number. However, my cell phone isn't always available. When the cell phone doesn't work, what happens? You get my voicemail associated with my cell phone. Wild, isn't it? Therefore, I am stuck carrying a cellular telephone and a pager. That's not all bad, though! My pager gives me the latest sport scores, stock quotes and weather reports. My cellular phone, not to be outdone, has real web browsing capabilities. It may not be too long before the mall store will notify me via cell or pager that they have a sale. Perhaps the item on sale will page me as I walk past it in the store to alert me to its presence. There are also the glasses in the TV commercial that allow someone to browse the web and make telephone calls all hands free.

Time to head for the finish line. Perhaps we can address this further in the future. I have not even begun to discuss all the "stuff" we carry around with us. We still need to discuss portable CD players and DVD players, laser pointers, a remote mouse for the notebook computer, PDAs, and the two hundred different batteries we carry around to keep everything powered up. So until next time, you might want to check your email, voicemail, pager, and PDA to make sure you have not missed a message while watching the DVD player in your notebook computer and reading this article.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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