In this column, we present information gleaned from the far reaches of the BASIS community. BASIS Chief Technical Officer, John Schroeder talks about his European Tour, and his travels to New York, Atlanta and Phoenix to begin a series of Technical Briefings and Workshops for BASIS Customers.

European Tour
GERMANY- September 22-30, 2001

I visited Germany in late September, to participate in the TechCon 2001 Deutschland, held on Sept 25 and 26 in Alsfeld, Germany, about an hour north of Frankfurt. This was just a short time after the attack on September 11, and traveling was a little spooky. Fortunately, my trip was uneventful. I was touched by the deep sympathy and support for the U.S. displayed by the German people. In several places, when people found out that I was American, they expressed shock and sympathy over the attack. It was very comforting to me, and I am sure, to many other Americans in Germany to experience that kind of support.

TechCon 2001 Deutschland was well-attended. Participation increased 15% compared to TechCon 2000. People came from all parts of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland to hear about BBj®. They were happy with what they saw and heard from our German Director, Herbert Schmitz, along with Falk Spitzberg and Peter Scholz, the consultants who handle support and training for BSG GmbH. Falk and Peter handled the detailed technical presentations on the various editions of BBj, the DataServer and AppServer, along with demonstrations of the BBj Thin Client in a browser. Herbert discussed the SAM plan and the fourth quarter specials that BASIS was offering. I did an opening talk, in German, presenting an overview of the many GUI applications that have been written in Visual PRO/5 and are moving to BBj. I also did an English presentation on BBj 2.0, along with a demonstration of the Netbeans BBjIDE. Two Customers, Herr Armin Kehler of EDV, and Herr Stephan Wald of Pharos GmbH, made presentations on products and services they had developed for their BASIS Customers in Germany.

On Thursday, September 27, after the conference Herbert and I visited Customers in Dortmund Germany. PRO/DV, a long-time BASIS Customer, supplies software to the gardening and landscaping industry in Germany. Herr Thomas Bock, project manager for PRO/DV, is directing the development of their next generation of software using BBj. He is very active in the testing of BBj Revision 2.0.

Also in Dortmund, we visited GCS, a supplier of distribution software. GCS wrote their package using TAOS and are very interesting in the forthcoming GUI TAOS.

MILAN, ITALY - October 1, 2001

The next stop was Milan, Italy, where I visited with Massimo Sorgoni, founder and president of Esseitalia. Esseitalia is a highly respected developer of software for the automotive industry in Italy. They have been using BASIS products for several years and are investigating how best to bring their application into GUI. A good portion of their software was developed in TAOS and they are looking forward to the GUI update, which will be available in the first quarter of 2002. Esse has several large automobile manufacturers, including Honda and Toyota, as Customers. GUI is becoming more important to their existing Customers and is essential when they want to attract new Customers.

I reviewed the Visual PRO/5® and BBj® approaches to GUI, with an emphasis on running in a browser-based system. The browser capability is of interest, particularly for some of Esse's larger Customers. The Esse staff are sophisticated developers. They are very aware of their clients' needs and the BASIS tools available to them to deliver their solution.

FRANCE - October 3-8, 2001

I went to France and met with Serge Kraemer, the BASIS Sales Manager for France. Our first Customer meeting was in Paris, on October 4. There we met with LGS, a subsidiary of IBM France, and with LGS' largest Customer, Carrefour, the hyper-market (think "super Wal-Mart") leader in the French retail industry. LGS has been the supplier of a complete retail management system named "Anabel", to Carrefour for several years. LGS has worked closely with Carrefour to supply the performance and features required.

Carrefour is very large and has been adding stores at a fast clip, while also keeping their stores open more hours each day. As the company grows, both in stores, and in software functionality, its challenge has been keeping the systems ahead of the business. Over the years, both LGS and Carrefour have done an excellent job in adapting the system to new business needs. Carrefour is now looking down the road for systems that can integrate its operations. Carrefour needs performance, connectivity, and flexibility in both the hardware and software platforms on which it runs its business. Carrefour also needs cost-effective solutions.

We discussed the latest developments in PRO/5® and BBj for Carrefour and LGS. They were very interested in upgrading their files to Rev 3.10, where MKEYED files have shown increased performance. Since their database is growing as well, they are also interested in large files. Sockets can provide a more powerful way of connecting disparate systems across the company. Sockets can enhance flexibility by enabling a browser interface for their current character based code. In addition, running on an AS/400 platform would enable them to use resources that are already available in the company. BASIS is investigating the feasibility of porting to an AS/400.

On Monday, October 8, Serge and I conducted a one-day TechCon 2001 France. It was attended by several BBx® developers, who are all somewhere on the path of moving their character applications into GUI. We spent the day in presentations and demonstrations of the GUI Tools in Visual PRO/5®, ResBuilder®, and GUIBuilder®, as well as the use of objects in BBj. The attendees were actively involved in the discussions and indicated a wide interest in the new features in Visual PRO/5 and BBj. They also showed interest in moving to BBj, particularly for the Thin Client capability.

--John Schroeder