- Recap:
  - Why Threads?
  - User-Level Threads vs. Kernel-Level Threads
- Thread-Based vs. Event-Based System Design?
  - Event-Based: John Ousterhout, "Why Threads are a Bad Idea (for most Purposes)"
  - Thread-Based: von Beren, Condit, Brewer, "Why Threads are a Bad
     Idea (for high-concurrency Servers)"
- Example: Windows Completion Ports.
- Reading: Silberschatz, Ch 3 & 4.

# Why Threads?

- Many interactive applications run in loops.
- For example, an interactive game.

```
while (1) {
    /* Read Keyboard */
    /* Recompute Player Position */
    /* Update Display */
}
```

 Reference [B.O. Gallmeister, "POSIX.4, Programming for the Real World," O'Reilly&Assoc., Inc.]

# Why Threads?

- Many interactive applications run in loops.
- For example, an interactive game.

```
while (1) {
    /* Synchronize to Highest
        Frequency */
    /* Read Keyboard */
    /* AND Read Mouse */
    /* Recompute Player Position */
    /* Update Display */
    /* AND emit sounds */
}
```

 Reference [B.O. Gallmeister, "POSIX.4, Programming for the Real World," O'Reilly&Assoc., Inc.]

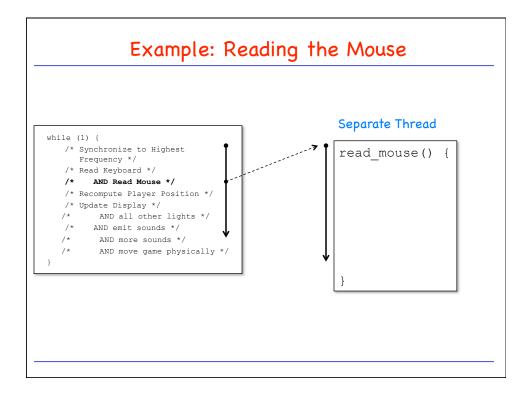
# Why Threads?

- Many interactive applications run in loops.
- For example, an interactive game.
- It ain't over yet!
- What about compute-intensive operations, like AI, video compression?
- How about Signal Handlers?

```
while (1) {
    /* Synchronize to Highest
        Frequency */
    /* Read Keyboard */
        /* AND Read Mouse */
        /* Recompute Player Position */
        /* Update Display */
        /* AND all other lights */
        /* AND emit sounds */
        /* AND more sounds */
        /* AND move game physically */
}
```

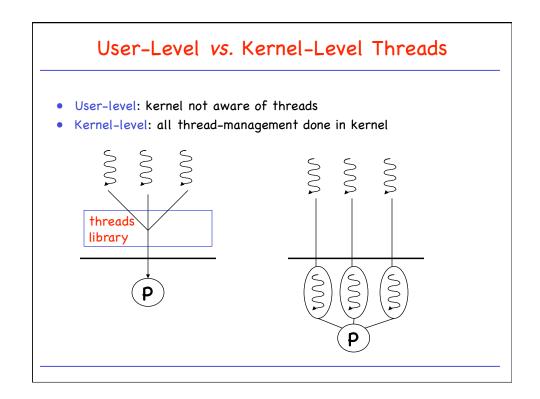
Suddenly, application is getting complex!

 Reference [B.O. Gallmeister, "POSIX.4, Programming for the Real World," O'Reilly&Assoc., Inc.]



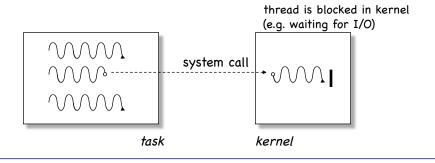
# Reading the Mouse: Thread Creation /\* The Mouse Input Function \*/ void \* read\_mouse() { char buf[BURSIZE]; ssize\_t nbytes; for (;;) { if ((nbytes = read\_from\_mouse(buf,BUFSIZE)) <= 0) break; dosomething\_with(buf, nbytes); /\* AND Read Mous /\* AND all oth /\* AND all oth /\* AND more sounds \*/ /\* AND move game physically \*/ } AND move game physically \*/ }

#### Reading the Mouse: Thread Creation (II) #include <pthread.h> int error; pthread\_t tid; if (error = pthread\_create(&tid, NULL, read\_mouse, NULL)) perror("Failed to create read\_mouse thread"); while (1) { /\* Synchronize to Highest Frequency \*/ /\* Read Keyboard \*/ /\* AND Read Mouse \*/ <- Handled by separate thread! /\* Recompute Player Position \*/ /\* Update Display \*/ AND all other lights \*/ AND emit sounds \*/ AND more sounds \*/ AND move game physically \*/

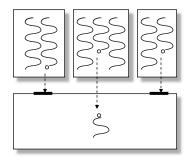


#### Potential Problems with Threads

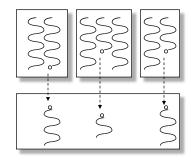
- General: Several threads run in the same address space:
  - Protection must be explicitly programmed (by appropriate thread synchronization)
  - Effects of misbehaving threads limited to task
- User-level threads: Some problems at the interface to the kernel: With a single-threaded kernel, as system call blocks the entire process.



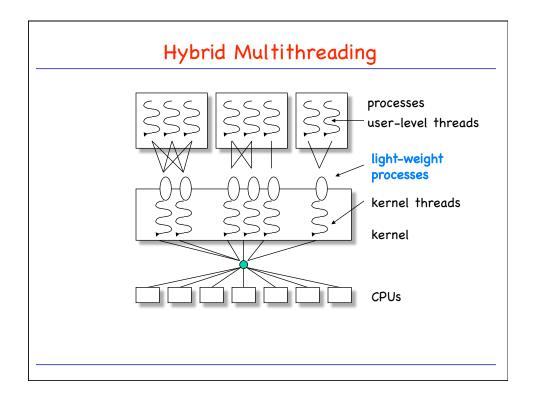
# Singlethreaded vs. Multithreaded Kernel

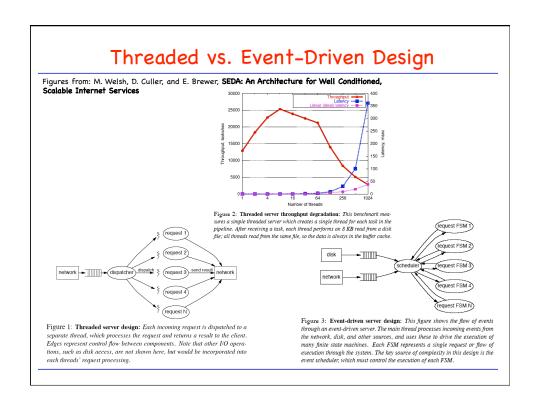


 Protection of kernel data structures is trivial, since only one process is allowed to be in the kernel at any time.



 Special protection mechanism is needed for shared data structures in kernel.





# Why Threads Are A Bad Idea (for most purposes)

John Ousterhout Sun Microsystems Laboratories

john.ousterhout@eng.sun.com
http://www.sunlabs.com/~ouster

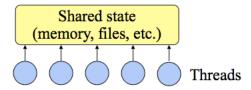
# Introduction

- Threads:
  - Grew up in OS world (processes).
  - Evolved into user-level tool.
  - Proposed as solution for a variety of problems.
  - Every programmer should be a threads programmer?
- Problem: threads are very hard to program.
- Alternative: events.
- Claims:
  - For most purposes proposed for threads, events are better.
  - Threads should be used only when true CPU concurrency is needed.

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 2

# What Are Threads?



- General-purpose solution for managing concurrency.
- Multiple independent execution streams.
- Shared state.
- Pre-emptive scheduling.
- Synchronization (e.g. locks, conditions).

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 3

# What Are Threads Used For?

- Operating systems: one kernel thread for each user process.
- Scientific applications: one thread per CPU (solve problems more quickly).
- Distributed systems: process requests concurrently (overlap I/Os).
- GUIs:
  - Threads correspond to user actions; can service display during long-running computations.
  - Multimedia, animations.

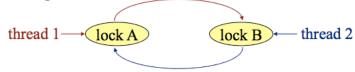
Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 4

# 

# Why Threads Are Hard

- Synchronization:
  - Must coordinate access to shared data with locks.
  - Forget a lock? Corrupted data.
- Deadlock:
  - Circular dependencies among locks.
  - Each process waits for some other process: system hangs.

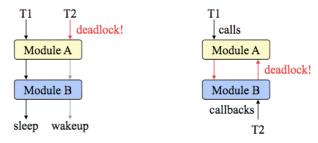


Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 6

#### Why Threads Are Hard, cont'd

- Hard to debug: data dependencies, timing dependencies.
- Threads break abstraction: can't design modules independently.
- Callbacks don't work with locks.



Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 7

# Why Threads Are Hard, cont'd

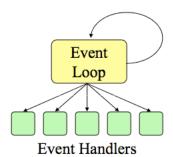
- Achieving good performance is hard:
  - Simple locking (e.g. monitors) yields low concurrency.
  - Fine-grain locking increases complexity, reduces performance in normal case.
  - OSes limit performance (scheduling, context switches).
- Threads not well supported:
  - Hard to port threaded code (PCs? Macs?).
  - Standard libraries not thread-safe.
  - Kernel calls, window systems not multi-threaded.
  - Few debugging tools (LockLint, debuggers?).
- Often don't want concurrency anyway (e.g. window events).

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 8

# **Event-Driven Programming**

- One execution stream: no CPU concurrency.
- Register interest in events (callbacks).
- Event loop waits for events, invokes handlers.
- No preemption of event handlers.
- Handlers generally short-lived.



September 28, 1995, slide 9

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

# What Are Events Used For?

- Mostly GUIs:
  - One handler for each event (press button, invoke menu entry, etc.).
  - Handler implements behavior (undo, delete file, etc.).
- Distributed systems:
  - One handler for each source of input (socket, etc.).
  - Handler processes incoming request, sends response.
  - Event-driven I/O for I/O overlap.

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 10

#### **Problems With Events**

- Long-running handlers make application nonresponsive.
  - Fork off subprocesses for long-running things (e.g. multimedia), use events to find out when done.
  - Break up handlers (e.g. event-driven I/O).
  - Periodically call event loop in handler (reentrancy adds complexity).
- Can't maintain local state across events (handler must return).
- ◆ No CPU concurrency (not suitable for scientific apps).
- Event-driven I/O not always well supported (e.g. poor write buffering).

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 11

#### **Events vs. Threads**

- Events avoid concurrency as much as possible, threads embrace:
  - Easy to get started with events: no concurrency, no preemption, no synchronization, no deadlock.
  - Use complicated techniques only for unusual cases.
  - With threads, even the simplest application faces the full complexity.
- Debugging easier with events:
  - Timing dependencies only related to events, not to internal scheduling.
  - Problems easier to track down: slow response to button vs. corrupted memory.

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 12

# Events vs. Threads, cont'd

- Events faster than threads on single CPU:
  - No locking overheads.
  - No context switching.
- Events more portable than threads.
- Threads provide true concurrency:
  - Can have long-running stateful handlers without freezes.
  - Scalable performance on multiple CPUs.

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 13

# **Should You Abandon Threads?**

- No: important for high-end servers (e.g. databases).
- But, avoid threads wherever possible:
  - Use events, not threads, for GUIs, distributed systems, low-end servers.
  - Only use threads where true CPU concurrency is needed.
  - Where threads needed, isolate usage in threaded application kernel: keep most of code single-threaded.

Event-Driven Handlers

Threaded Kernel

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 14

#### **Conclusions**

- Concurrency is fundamentally hard; avoid whenever possible.
- Threads more powerful than events, but power is rarely needed.
- Threads much harder to program than events; for experts only.
- Use events as primary development tool (both GUIs and distributed systems).
- Use threads only for performance-critical kernels.

Why Threads Are A Bad Idea

September 28, 1995, slide 15

# A Dissenting Opinion (selected slides)



# Why Events Are A Bad Idea

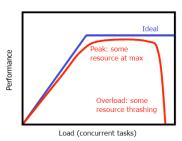
(for high-concurrency servers)

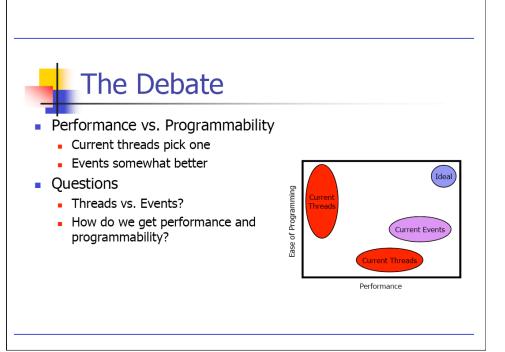
Rob von Behren, Jeremy Condit and Eric Brewer
University of California at Berkeley
{jrvb,jcondit,brewer}@cs.berkeley.edu
http://capriccio.cs.berkeley.edu

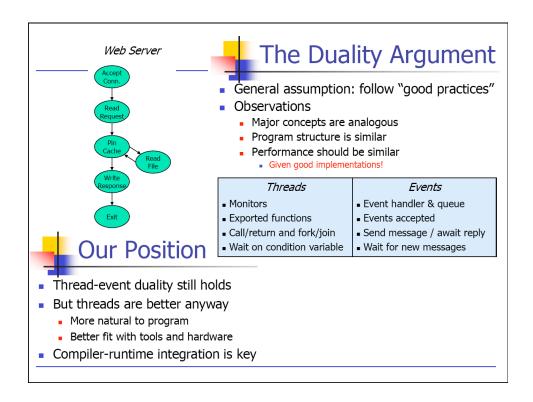
A Talk HotOS 2003



- Highly concurrent applications
  - Internet servers (Flash, Ninja, SEDA)
  - Transaction processing databases
- Workload
  - Operate "near the knee"
  - Avoid thrashing!
- What makes concurrency hard?
  - Race conditions
  - Scalability (no O(n) operations)
  - Scheduling & resource sensitivity
  - Inevitable overload
  - Code complexity







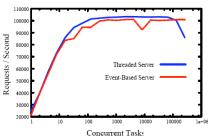


- Recent arguments for events
  - Lower runtime overhead
  - Better live state management
  - Inexpensive synchronization
  - More flexible control flow
  - Better scheduling and locality
- All true but...
  - No inherent problem with threads!
  - Thread implementations can be improved



# **Runtime Overhead**

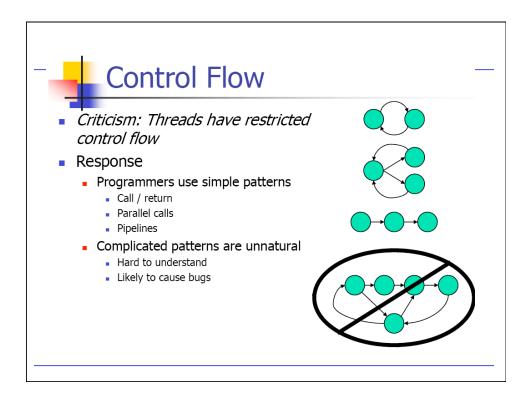
- Criticism: Threads don't perform well for high concurrency
- Response
  - Avoid O(n) operations
  - Avoid O(n) operations
     Minimize context switch overhead
- Simple scalability test
  - Slightly modified GNU Pth
  - Thread-per-task vs. single thread
  - Same performance!

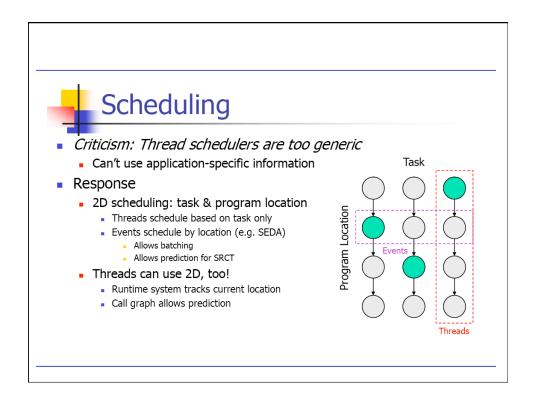




# Synchronization

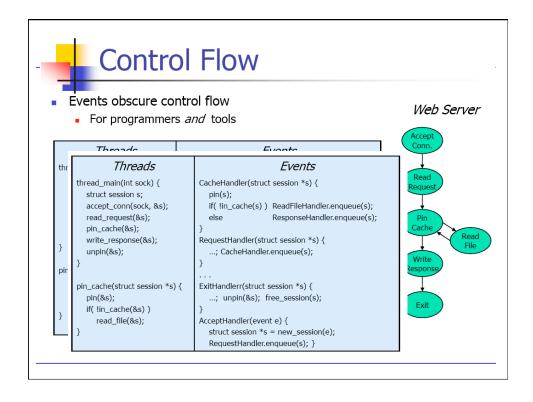
- Criticism: Thread synchronization is heavyweight
- Response
  - Cooperative multitasking works for threads, too!
  - Also presents same problems
    - Starvation & fairness
    - Multiprocessors
    - Unexpected blocking (page faults, etc.)
  - Compiler support helps

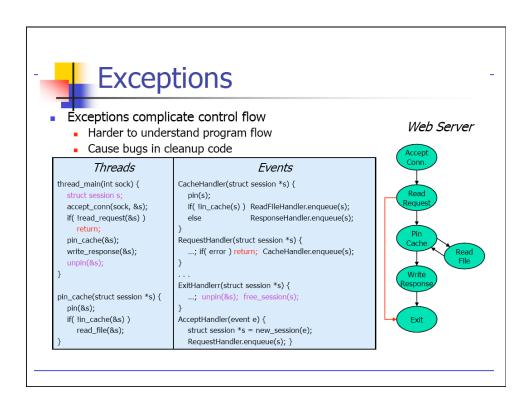


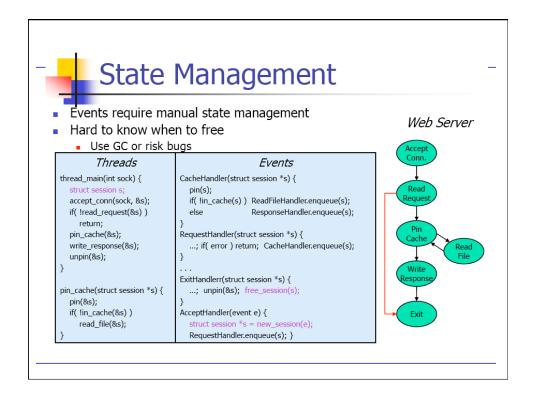




- More natural programming model
  - Control flow is more apparent
  - Exception handling is easier
  - State management is automatic
- Better fit with current tools & hardware
  - Better existing infrastructure
  - Allows better performance?









# **Existing Infrastructure**

- Lots of infrastructure for threads
  - Debuggers
  - Languages & compilers
- Consequences
  - More amenable to analysis
  - Less effort to get working systems



# **Better Performance?**

- Function pointers & dynamic dispatch
  - Limit compiler optimizations
  - Hurt branch prediction & I-cache locality
- More context switches with events?
  - Example: Haboob does 6x more than Knot
  - Natural result of queues
- More investigation needed!

# 4

# The Future: Compiler-Runtime Integration

- Insight
  - Automate things event programmers do by hand
  - Additional analysis for other things
- Specific targets
  - Dynamic stack growth\*
  - Live state management
  - Synchronization
  - Scheduling\*
- Improve performance and decrease complexity

Dispute New Threads?

Current Threads

Current Threads

Current Threads

Performance

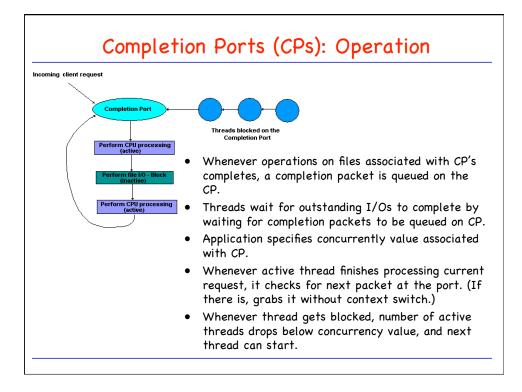
#### Event-Driven Programming: Completion Ports

#### • Rationale:

- Minimize context switches by having threads avoid unnecessary blocking.
- Maximize parallelism by using multiple threads.
- Ideally, have one thread actively servicing a request on every processor.
- Do not block thread if there are additional requests waiting when thread completes a request.
- The application must be able to activate another thread when current thread blocks on I/O (e.g. when it reads from a file)

#### Resources:

- Inside IO Completion Ports: http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb963891.aspx
- Multithreaded Asynchronous I/O & I/O Completion Ports: http://www.ddj.com/cpp/20120292
- Parallel Programming with C++ I/O Completion Ports: http://weblogs.asp.net/kennykerr/archive/2008/01/03/parallel-programming-with-c-part-4-i-o-completion-ports.aspx



# Completion Ports: APIs

```
CP creation:
HANDLE CreateIoCompletionPort(
  HANDLE FileHandle,
                                     /* NULL -> create new CP */
  HANDLE ExistingCompletionPort,
  DWORD CompletionKey,
  DWORD NumberOfConcurrentThreads /* Concurrency value */
Retrieve next completion packet:
BOOL GetQueuedCompletionStatus(
  HANDLE
                 CompletionPort,
  T-PDWORD
                 lpNumberOfBytesTransferred,
  LPDWORD
                 CompletionKey,
  LPOVERLAPPED *lpOverlapped,
                 dwMiillisecondTimeout
);
Generate completion packets:
PostQueuedCompletionStatus(...); /* e.g. server informs threads about
                                   external events. */
```

# CP Example: Web Server: Startup

Tom R. Dial, "Multithreaded Asynchronous I/O & I/O Completion Ports," Dr. D /\* Fire.cpp - The Fire Web Server \* Copyright (C) 2007 Tom R. Dial int main(int /\*argc\*/, char\* /\*argv\*/[]) { // Initialize the Microsoft Windows Sockets Library WSADATA Wsa={0}; WSAStartup( MAKEWORD(2,2), &Wsa ); // Get the working directory; this is used when transmitting files back. GetCurrentDirectory( \_MAX\_PATH, RootDirectory ); // Create an event to use to synchronize the shutdown process. StopEvent = CreateEvent( 0, FALSE, FALSE, 0 ); // Setup a console control handler: We stop the server on CTRL-C SetConsoleCtrlHandler( ConsoleCtrlHandler, TRUE ); // Create a new I/O Completion port.  $\label{eq:handle_ioport} \textbf{HANDLE IoPort} = \textbf{CreateIoCompletionPort} ( \ \textbf{INVALID\_HANDLE\_VALUE}, \, \textbf{0}, \, \textbf{0}, \, \textbf{WORKER\_THREAD\_COUNT} \, );$ // Set up a socket on which to listen for new connections. SOCKET Listener = WSASocket( PF\_INET, SOCK\_STREAM, IPPROTO\_TCP, 0, 0, WSA\_FLAG\_OVERLAPPED ); struct sockaddr\_in Addr={0}; Addr.sin\_family = AF\_INET; Addr.sin\_addr.S\_un.S\_addr = INADDR\_ANY; Addr.sin\_port = htons( DEFAULT\_PORT ); // Bind the listener to the local interface and set to listening state. bind( Listener, (struct sockaddr\*)&Addr, sizeof(struct sockaddr\_in) );

Threads 23

listen( Listener, DEFAULT\_LISTEN\_QUEUE\_SIZE );

#### CP Example: Web Server: Start Threads

# CP Example: Web Server: Shutdown

```
// Deregister console control handler: We stop the server on CTRL-C
SetConsoleCtrlHandler( NULL, FALSE );
// Post a quit completion message, one per worker thread.
for (size_t i=0; i<WORKER_THREAD_COUNT; i++)
       PostQueuedCompletionStatus( IoPort, 0, COMPLETION_KEY_SHUTDOWN, 0 );
// Wait for all of the worker threads to terminate...
WaitForMultipleObjects( WORKER_THREAD_COUNT, Workers, TRUE, INFINITE );
// Close worker thread handles.
for (size_t i=0; i<WORKER_THREAD_COUNT; i++)
       CloseHandle( Workers[i] );
// Close stop event.
CloseHandle(StopEvent);
// Shut down the listener socket and close the I/O port.
shutdown( Listener, SD_BOTH );
closesocket( Listener );
CloseHandle( IoPort );
// Delete connections.
for (size_t i=0; i<MAX_CONCURRENT_CONNECTIONS; i++)
      delete( Connections[i] );
WSACleanup();
return 0:
```

#### CP Example: Web Server: Worker Threads

```
// Worker thread procedure.
unsigned int __stdcall WorkerProc(void* IoPort) {
   for (;;) {
      BOOL
                    Status
      DWORD
                     NumTransferred = 0;
      ULONG_PTR
                    CompKey
                                    = COMPLETION_KEY_NONE;
      LPOVERLAPPED pOver
                                    = 0:
      Status = GetQueuedCompletionStatus( reinterpret_cast<HANDLE>(IoPort),
                                          &NumTransferred, &CompKey, &pOver,INFINITE );
      Connection* pConn = reinterpret_cast<Connection*>( pOver );
      if ( FALSE == Status ) {
         // An error occurred; reset to a known state.
         if ( pConn ) pConn->IssueReset();
      } else if ( COMPLETION_KEY_IO == CompKey ) {
          pConn->OnIoComplete( NumTransferred );
      } else if ( COMPLETION_KEY_SHUTDOWN == CompKey ) {
         break;
   return 0;
}
```

# CP Example: Web Server: Connections

```
// Class representing a single connection.
class Connection : public OVERLAPPED {
   enum STATE { WAIT_ACCEPT = 0, WAIT_REQUEST = 1,
                WAIT_TRANSMIT = 2, WAIT_RESET = 3 };
   Connection(SOCKET Listener, HANDLE IoPort) : myListener(Listener) {
         myState = WAIT_ACCEPT;
         // [...]
         mySock = WSASocket( PF_INET, SOCK_STREAM, IPPROTO_TCP,
                               0, 0, WSA_FLAG_OVERLAPPED );
         // Associate the client socket with the I/O Completion Port.
         {\color{blue} \textbf{CreateIoCompletionPort(reinterpret\_cast<HANDLE>(mySock),}}
                                IoPort, COMPLETION_KEY_IO, 0 );
         IssueAccept();
   ~Connection() {
      shutdown( mySock, SD_BOTH );
      closesocket( mySock );
```

#### CP Example: Web Server: State Machines (I)

# CP Example: Web Server: State Machines (II)

```
// READ OPERATION
// Issue an asynchronous read operation.
void Connection::IssueRead(void) {
       myState = WAIT_REQUEST
      ReadFile( (HANDLE)mySock, myReadBuf, DEFAULT_READ_BUFFER_SIZE,
          O, (OVERLAPPED*)this );
}
// Complete the read operation, appending the request with the latest data.
void Connection::CompleteRead(size_t NumBytesRead) {
      // [...]
// Has the client finished sending the request?
      if ( IsRequestComplete( NumBytesRead ) ) {
          // Yes. Transmit the response.
          IssueTransmit();
      } else {
          // The client is not finished. If data was read this pass, we assume the connection
          // is still good and read more. If not, we assume that the client closed the socket
          // prematurely.
          if ( NumBytesRead )
                                 IssueRead();
      }
   }
```

```
CP Example: Web Server: State Machines (III)
   // Parse the request, and transmit the response.
   void Connection::IssueTransmit() {
         myState = WAIT_TRANSMIT;
         // Simplified parsing of the request: just ignore first token.
         char* Method = strtok( (&myRequest[0]), " ");
         if (!Method) {
            IssueReset():
            return;
         // Parse second token, create file, transmit file ..
                                                   void Connection::IssueReset()
        myFile = CreateFile( /* ... */ );
         TransmitFile( mySock, myFile,
                                                        myState = WAIT_RESET;
                     Info.nFileSizeLow, 0, this,
                                                        TransmitFile( mySock, 0, 0, 0, this, 0,
                     &myTransmitBuffers, 0 );
                                                           TF_DISCONNECT | TF_REUSE_SOCKET );
  void Connection::CompleteTransmit() {
                                                     void Connection::CompleteReset(void)
         // Issue the reset; this prepares the
         // socket for reuse.
                                                        ClearBuffers();
         IssueReset();
                                                        IssueAccept(); // Continue to next request!
   }
```

# CP Example: Web Server: Dispatching

```
// The main handler for the connection, responsible for state transitions.
  void Connection::OnIoComplete(DWORD NumTransferred) {
     switch ( myState ) {
     case WAIT_ACCEPT:
        CompleteAccept();
        break;
     case WAIT_REQUEST:
        CompleteRead( NumTransferred );
        break;
     case WAIT_TRANSMIT:
        CompleteTransmit();
        break;
     case WAIT_RESET:
        CompleteReset();
        break;
     }
 }
```