

# The Embedded Muse 28

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## Embedded Overload, Take 2

Last issue's rant against poorly designed consumer embedded systems brought a number of replies. One of the more interesting ones came from Bob Blumenscheid of Grammar Engine, Inc. (a maker of ROM emulators):

Hi Jack,

I feel the same way when it sometimes takes all my knowledge of how my computer and office network works to get a document to print. My latest frustrating experience with a PC peripheral was with a "Talk with me Barbie (tm)", last year's big seller on remainder last weekend to make room for this year's toys. This Barbie has an IR sensor concealed in a locket in her neck. She can have girls' names, birthdays, personal info and other details from Barbie software downloaded via serial port to an IR port in a Barbie computer. She then makes personal comments when you press her button.

After putting in Barbie's batteries (4 button cells and a AAA in each thigh - Are all Dads embarrassed around naked Barbies?) I had the classic Windows experience: everything configured correctly, but nothing worked. Barbie would not download.

After an hour of checking baud rates and serial drivers, I discovered the problem was unclear documentation. If someone had just said to me: "Before downloading, place Barbie in IR receive mode by pressing and holding the button on her back" I'd have been in home territory. But I only got it working after replaying and listening closely about 15 times to the 5-step, spoken only .wav instructions on the CD-ROM.

So the good news is my daughter still thinks I'm a hero, and I'm available as a consultant if Mattel wants to know why embedded Barbie bombed. And for the first time, a woman has said to me "We have a problem - click on my help button."

## Free Technical Training

Techonline - at <http://www.tolu.com> - offers a number of free training courses that may be of interest to y'all.

Currently they have the following online:

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- Theory and Practice of Technical Standards
- Understanding Wireless Communications
- Overview of Digital Signal Processing
- xDSL: Digital Subscriber Lines Explained
- Analog Devices DSP Development Environment

## **Thought for the Week**

You'll find a very irreverent but amusing "The Ten Commandments for C Programmers" at:

[http://lglwww.epfl.ch/~wolf/c/ten\\_commandments.html](http://lglwww.epfl.ch/~wolf/c/ten_commandments.html)

## **About The Embedded Muse**

The Embedded Muse is an occasional newsletter sent via email by Jack Ganssle. Send complaints, comments, and contributions to him at [jack@ganssle.com](mailto:jack@ganssle.com).

To subscribe, send a message to [majordomo@ganssle.com](mailto:majordomo@ganssle.com), with the words "subscribe embedded *your-email-address*" in the body. To unsubscribe, change the message to "unsubscribe embedded *your-email-address*".

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