

## Semi-Colons in UDCs

### Data Based Advisor

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This one been asked by several readers. Here's a UDC that you may have seen in a previous issue:

```
#command @ , GET      ;
RADIO      ;
=> SetPos( , )      ;
;RadioGets ( { |x| iif (x == NIL,      ;
, :=x) },      ;
<(var)>, {}, GetList) ;
```

Look at the line containing the call to RadioGets(), and you'll see a semi-colon at the beginning of the line. A few readers wanted to know why it's there. It has to do with the way the processor handles commands.

You can see how the processor processes your commands by compiling with the /p option. The preprocessor creates a file with a PPO extension, where it places the results of its preprocessing. The important point for this discussion is that regardless of the structure of the command's right side, all output is contained on one line. Therefore, commands that emit more than one statement, such as the @..GET RADIO command above, must have the statements separated by a semi-colon.

That's what the semi-colon before RadioGets() is for--to separate the two statements in the preprocessor output. (Just so you know: The semi-colons at the end of each line are there simply so the magazine can continue the command definition over more than one line, since code is restricted to a 52-column width.)

Another reader had a different question about the same command. He pointed out that as the command stands, it doesn't support Clipper's WHEN and VALID clauses. Fortunately, it's simple to extend the command this way:

```
#command @ , GET ; RADIO ; [WHEN ] ; [VALID ] ;
```

The real question, of course, is what to do with them on the right side. Well, you must first convert them to code blocks, then pass them to RadioGets():

```
; RadioGets( { |x| iif (x == NIL, ; , := x) }, ; <(var)>, {}, ; <{when}>, <{valid}>, GetList) ;
```

RadioGets () then assigns the WHEN clause to the preBlock instance variable, and the valid clause to the postBlock instance variable.

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