Using Static Code Analysis to Find Bugs Before They Become Failures

Presented by Brian Walker
Senior Software Engineer,
Video Product Line, Tektronix, Inc.

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In the Beginning, There Was Lint

- Syntactic analysis found many simple coding mistakes
  - Mismatched arguments
  - Incompatible data type usage
  - Uninitialized variables
  - Printf() format argument mismatch

- Analyzed one source file at a time

- Generated lot’s of warnings
  - Not all of them useful

- Function is now integrated into most compiler
Beyond Lint

- Functional analysis without execution
  - Functional analysis, not just compilation errors
  - Data flow and control flow analysis
  - Typically automated

- Incorporates some aspects of reverse engineering
  - Analyzes objects and their usage
  - Follows resource allocation, initialization and de-allocation

- Considers the whole program
  - Analyses entire build, not just individual files
  - Examines all execution paths within functions and between functions
  - Calculates range of possible values for each variable
  - line by line, complete coverage (for known issues)

- Quality, not quantity
  - Balance aggressiveness with restraint
Elements of a Static Code Analysis System

- **Library of issues and patterns**
  - Identifies problem severity
  - Ability to define new patterns or suppress unwanted patterns

- **Database for tracking issues**
  - Manage issue priority and ignore false positives
  - Identify new issues over time and track as source files change
  - Identify fixed issues

- **Accessible issue reporting interface**
  - Detailed description of specific issue and location in source code
  - Assist developers to understand, investigate and fix bugs
  - Sometimes integrated into IDE

- **Compilation process to perform analysis**
  - May require as much time as actual build
  - Must be run with the same options and compiler flags
Using the Klocwork Static Analysis Tool

- **Klocwork Insight**
  - Software developed at Nortel Networks
  - Analyzes C, C++, C# and Java

- **Uses build auditing approach**
  - Manifest generator runs normal build script
  - Captures files, commands and options
  - Generates manifest
  - Directs analysis
  - Consults library
  - Queries database
  - Updates database
  - Generates reports
**Configuring the Analysis**

- **Klocwork does not support incremental builds**
  - Needs to know all of the files in the build, needs to be reminded
  - Vendor suggested rebuild the manifest after adding/removing files
  - or, Perform full build every time

- **Integration with ClearCase**
  - ClearCase records complete configuration record for build
  - Build manifest file format clearly described in Klocwork documentation
  - Developed simple script to create manifest from ClearCase config record
  - Generate file ownership from version history
Integrating Static Analysis in our Environment

- Incorporated into nightly builds
  - Klocwork analysis runs as a step in the nightly build
  - Uses ClearCase configuration record to produce manifest
  - Uses ClearCase version history to determine file ownership

- Manual review of new issues reported
  - Review of new and uncited issues
  - Set status according to severity and priority
  - Forward new issues to team members

- Investigate and make changes to source code
  - Analysis usually provides enough detail to quickly fix issue
  - Use browser to search for declarations and implementation
Managing Issues in Klocwork

- Klocwork determines the “state” of an issue
  - Identifies issues as new, existing, recurred, fixed or not in scope
  - Maintains history of current issues
  - Detects when new issues are discovered

- Reviewer determines the “status” of an issue
  - Analysis -> Citing -> Resolution
  - Every new issue starts with status set to analyze (uncited)
  - Users choose fix, fix in next release, fix in later release, not a problem
  - Reviewer and implementer can add notes to issue record
  - Analyze or Fix status identifies open issues

- Issues with issue management process
  - Would be nice if citing could automatically generate bug report
  - Does not provide real tracking capability
Klocwork Issue Reports

- Contains a specific description of the problem
  - “Array ‘foo’ of size 22 may use index values or -2 .. -1. Also there are similar errors on lines 491, 494.”
  - Provides traceback of analysis showing all locations that affect value
  - Traceback references highlighted in source code listing
  - Nested references can be expanded for deeper dive

- Cross reference interface allows exploration of source code
  - Finds declarations functions, variables, macros and constants
  - Finds where items are used, referenced, read or written
  - Welcome feature to aid in the investigation of issues
**Klocwork Issue Detail Display**

- **Issue description**
  - Summary
  - Link to record
  - Name
  - Location
  - Owner
  - Severity
  - State
  - Status
  - Comments

- **Traceback of problem path**
  - Listed in order of execution
  - References to lines of code
  - Nested references to other functions
  - Nested references expand for deeper investigation
Klocwork Issue Identification

- Klocwork uses short hand notation to identify problem types
  - ABR: Array Buffer Overrun
  - NNTS: Non-Null-Terminating String
  - Tends to be concise and memorable
  - Can often determine type of problem in a glance

- Online documentation tends to be well written and informative
  - Provides description, specific vulnerabilities, risks, mitigation and prevention
  - Focus on security

- One common distinction: must vs. might
  - “Must” issues indicate error that occur as a result of a single failure
    - NPD.FUNC.MUST: NULL pointer returned by function always dereferenced
  - “Might” indicates a failure might occur if more than one condition is true
    - NPD.FUNC.MIGHT: NULL pointer dereferenced under certain conditions
Types of Issues Found by Static Analysis

- Null pointer dereferences
  - Very effective in discovering null pointer dereference issues
  - Many due to not checking pointer parameters for NULL
  - NPD.CHECK.MIGHT: pointer checked for NULL but still dereferenced
  - Can be quite insidious and may be overlooked in code review

```c
int handle_request( int op, int reqid, PduType *pdu, SyncState *state)
{
    if (reqid != state->reqid && pdu && pdu->command != MSG_REPORT) {
        return 0;
    }
    if (op == RECEIVED_MESSAGE) {
        if (pdu->command == MSG_REPORT) {
            blah;
            blah;
            blah;
        }
    }
}
```
Types of Issues Found by Static Analysis

- Array buffer overruns
  - Klocwork has discovered quite a few flavors
  - String handling is common theme, especially regarding numbers
    ```
    char buffer[8];
    sprintf( buffer, "%s%d", type, value);
    ```

- Memory leaks
  - Often caused by improper error handling
  - Often not covered by functional testing
  - Might be covered by unit testing
  - C++ class constructors and destructors
    - Expects that memory allocated in a constructor is freed in destructor
    - Also expects copy constructor and assignment operator
  - Death by a thousand pin pricks
Types of Issues Found by Static Analysis

- **Use of freed memory**
  - Checks for use of memory pointer after return to system heap
  - Did not expect to see in our software
  - Found in third-party and open source components

- **File Resource Leaks**
  - Like memory leaks, often the result of improper error handling
  - Klocwork reports as lower priority
  - Have found instances where file handles can be lost

- **Concurrency violations**
  - Our software is often multithreaded
  - Uncovered problems with semaphore handling
    - Warns when semaphores taken but not returned within a function
    - Warns when thread goes to sleep while still holding semaphore
Types of Issues Found by Static Analysis

- **Security vulnerabilities**
  - Becoming a greater concern as more devices become connected
  - Secure programming practices less obvious and often overlooked
  - Vulnerable program will still pass functional tests
  - Testing requires effort to actively exploit vulnerabilities

- **Number of reported vulnerabilities continues to grow**
  - Risk of failure includes potential for exposure of sensitive data
  - Prevention is far more effective than remediation

- **Most vulnerabilities can be traced to a relatively small number of programming errors**
  - Klocwork references Common Weakness Enumeration dictionary
  - Klocwork recently added support for MISRA C and C++ coding standards
    - Adopted by aerospace, telecommunications, medical, defense and others
Analyzing the Analysis

- Finds many high-quality issues in the source code
  - From 500,000 lines of C/C++ in more than 2000 files
  - Found 1500 issues
  - Rejected 175 issues

- Somebody had to look at those 1500 Issues
  - Established code base, and third-party contributions
  - Examine, prioritize and eventually fix

- True value seen after bug debt has been paid
  - Problems found can be quickly identified and corrected
  - Most useful when employed on new software as preventative
Analyzing the Analysis

- Potential to save many hours of frustration
  - Hours spent trying to reproduce and capture an instance of a crash bug
  - Race conditions can be the most devious and time consuming
  - Found in Klockwork database after the fact.

- Other bugs are more treacherous
  - Array access may overflow into unrelated data structure
  - May cause mayhem in unrelated thread
  - Or write over a virtual table causing mysterious crash
  - Debugging requires setting watch point to catch in the act

- But, not perfect
  - Has reported at least one false positive
  - Has missed at least one array buffer overrun that caused random crash
  - Ideally maintains a balance between useful and annoying

- Promotes good programming practices
Looking Forward

- Desktop integration
  - Potentially provide instant feedback to developers
  - Developers could fix errors before committing to version control system
  - Many vendors provide integrations for Eclipse and Visual Studio
  - Still perform bulk of analysis nightly

- Compiler integration
  - Some vendors provide static analysis in compiler
  - Integrated with build processes
  - Limits choice of compiler
Fitting it all Together

- Excellent tool for finding bugs early in development
  - Compliments compiler warnings
  - Does not require actual hardware to analyze software

- Complements dynamic analysis (functional testing)
  - Able to follow all/most paths within each function
  - Testing and analysis are adept at finding different kinds of faults
    - Cannot test functional requirements through static analysis
    - Cannot reproduce all scenarios through emulation

- Complements formal code review and peer review
  - Consistently finds instances of known issues
  - Cannot replace expert eyes of peers

- Best option for testing third-party and open source software
  - Most open source software is provided “as-is and without warrantee”

- Increases the tribal knowledge of an organization
Questions and Answers

Brian Walker
Brian.R.Walker@tektronix.com