

C++ coroutines: Framework interop

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20191211-00

December 11, 2019



Raymond Chen

So far, we've been looking at the basics of awaitable objects. Even though we barely know anything beyond `await_ suspend`, we already know enough to allow us to start diving deeper.

It is frequently the case that you need your awaiter to interact with something outside the C++ standard library. To make it easier to integrate coroutines with existing frameworks, the `coroutine_handle` can be converted to a `void*` by calling its `address()` method, and the resulting `void*` can be converted back to an equivalent `coroutine_handle` by calling `from_ address()`.¹

Most frameworks let you pass a pointer-sized piece of data around to help remember state, and being able to convert a handle into a pointer (and back) lets you pass the coroutine handle through such state parameters. Otherwise, you'd have to copy the `coroutine_handle` to the heap and pass the address of the heap block, and then keep track of when to free the heap block.

Let's demonstrate this by reimplementing `resume_ new_ thread` in terms of Win32 functions instead of the `std:: thread` standard library class.

```

struct resume_new_thread : std::experimental::suspend_always
{
    void await_suspend(
        std::experimental::coroutine_handle<> handle)
    {
        HANDLE thread = CreateThread(nullptr, 0, callback,
                                     handle.address(), 0, &threadId);
        if (!thread) throw some_kind_of_error();
        CloseHandle(thread);
    }

    DWORD CALLBACK callback(void* parameter)
    {
        auto handle = std::experimental::coroutine_handle<>::
            from_address(parameter);

        handle();
        return 0;
    }
};

```

The basic idea is the same as last time: When the coroutine suspends, schedule the continuation on a newly-created thread.

The `CreateThread` function allows you to pass a single pointer-sized piece of data, so we convert our handle to a `void*` by calling the `address` method, and pass that pointer as the reference data to the thread procedure. The thread procedure converts the pointer back into a coroutine handle by calling `from_address`, and then invokes the coroutine to resume execution.

If terseness is your game, you could inline the thread procedure as a stateless lambda, taking advantage of [the implicit conversion from a stateless lambda to a function pointer](#).

```

struct resume_new_thread : std::experimental::suspend_always
{
    void await_suspend(
        std::experimental::coroutine_handle<> handle)
    {
        HANDLE thread = CreateThread(nullptr, 0,
        [](void* parameter) -> DWORD
        {
            std::experimental::coroutine_handle<>::
                from_address(parameter)();

            return 0;
        }, handle.address(), 0, &threadId);
        if (!thread) throw some_kind_of_error();
        CloseHandle(thread);
    }
};

```

Next time, we'll use what we've learned about awaiters to develop a way to override C++/WinRT coroutine threading defaults.

¹ The method names `address` and `from_address` give a strong clue as to what the `void*` represents: it's the address of runtime-managed coroutine state, known in the language specification as a *coroutine frame*.

Raymond Chen

Follow

