Building an LLVM Backend

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Introduction

- Yet another talk about creating a LLVM target?
- LLVM backend crash course, for beginners
 - How-tos and tips
 - Solution to common problems
- Example target created for this tutorial
 - Can be used to see how LLVM works
 - Can be used as a skeleton to bootstrap new target

Overview

- Part 1: Background
- Part 2: Creating your own target
- Part 3: How-tos for specific tasks
- Part 4: Troubleshooting and tips

Part 1

Background

What you need to start

- Know a little bit about LLVM IR: Ilvm.org/docs/LangRef.html
- xdot.py to visualize graphs when debugging: github.com/jrfonseca/xdot.py
- Check out and build our LLVM repo from GitHub: github.com/frasercrmck/llvm-leg
- This informative and well-presented talk!

Example target: LEG

- Simple, RISC-like architecture
 - Very small subset of ARM
- 12 integer registers (32-bit)
 - r0, r1, ..., r9, sp (stack pointer), lr (return address)
- Instructions:
 - 32-bit arithmetic (add, subtract, multiply, mad)
 - 32-bit register move, 16-bit constant moves
 - load, store, branch, branch and link

Calling convention for LEG

- How values are passed to/from a function
- Arguments in r0 (1st), r1 (2nd), ..., r3 (4th)
 - Further arguments passed on the stack
- Return value in r0

```
.foo:
    add r0, r0, r1
    b lr
ex1.s
```

The big picture

- Pipeline structure of the backend:
 - $IR \rightarrow SelectionDAG \rightarrow MachineDAG \rightarrow MachineInstr \rightarrow MCInst$
- Transforms your program many times
 - Same program, few different representations
 - Different instruction namespaces
 - Check it out (IR and MI only):
 - Ilc foo.ll -print-after-all 2>&1 > foo.log

A look at an IR module

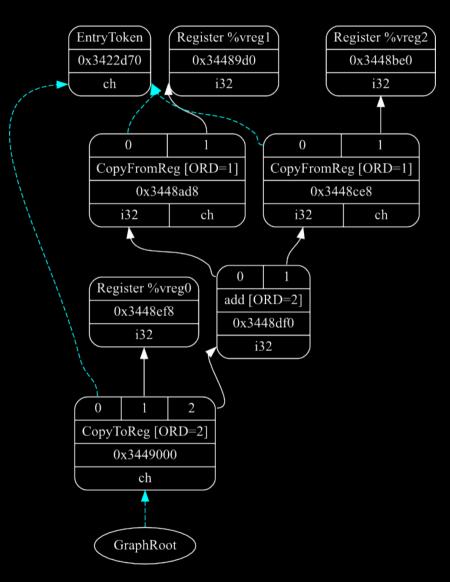
- High-level, linear representation
- Typed values, no registers
- Target-agnostic
 - Exceptions: data layout, triple, intrinsics

```
target datalayout = "e-m:e-p:32:32-i1:8:32-i8:8:32-i16:16:32-
i64:32-f64:32-a:0:32-n32"
target triple = "leg"

define i32 @foo(i32 %a, i32 %b) {
    %c = add nsw i32 %a, %b
    ret i32 %c
}
ex1.11
```

A look at a SelectionDAG graph

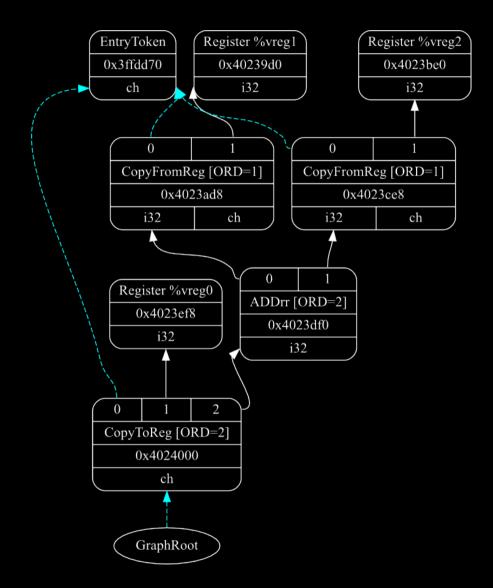
- Graph representation
- Operations as nodes
 - Mostly target-agnostic
 - LEGISD (ISD) namespace
- Dependencies as edges
 - Data
 - Order ("chain")
 - Scheduling ("glue")
- Typed values



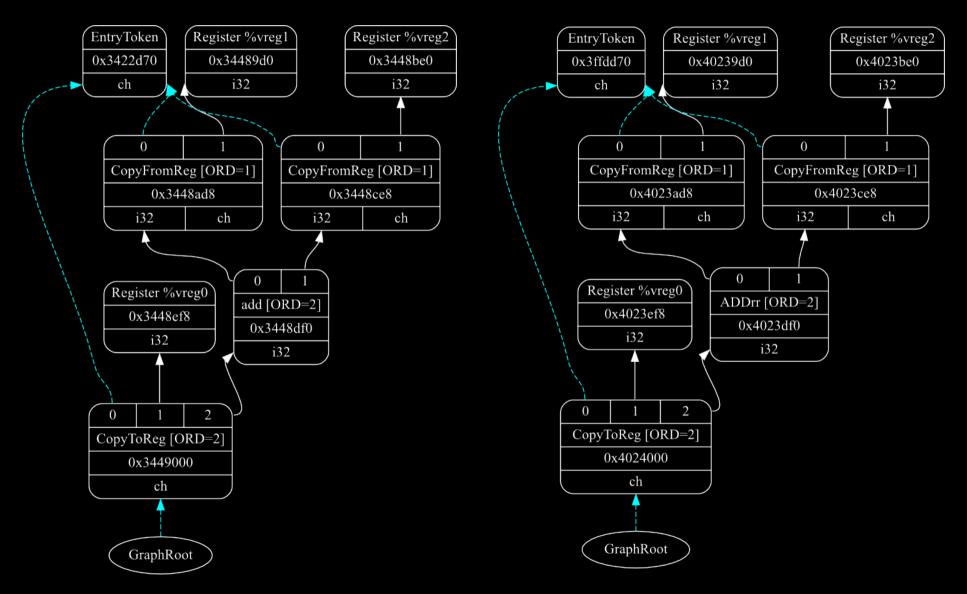
 $IR \rightarrow SelectionDAG \rightarrow MachineDAG \rightarrow MachineInstr \rightarrow MCInst$

A look at a MachineDAG graph

- Very similar to SelectionDAG
- Instructions as nodes
 - Result of instruction selection
 - LEG namespace
- Similar dependencies
- Similar types



Before and after ISel



 $IR \rightarrow SelectionDAG \rightarrow MachineDAG \rightarrow MachineInstr \rightarrow MCInst$

A look at a MachineInstr block

- Untyped, uses register classes instead
- Target-specific instructions (LEG namespace)
 - Few exceptions (TargetOpcode namespace)

```
BB#0: derived from LLVM BB %entry
  Live Ins: %R0 %R1

%R0<def> = ADDrr %R0<kill>, %R1<kill> ; %R0, %R1, %R2: GRRegs

Successors according to CFG: BB#1

ex1-mi.txt
```

Part 2

Creating your own target

Bits of your ISA you need to describe

- Target machine
 - Registers, register classes
 - Calling conventions
- Instruction set
 - Operands and patterns
 - Assembly printing and/or instruction encoding
 - Schedule (not part of this talk)

• ...

TableGen

- C++-style syntax
- Different set of backends
 - RegisterInfo, InstrInfo, AsmWriter, ...
- TableGen backends generate .inc files
 - Included by your C++ files
- More information:
 - Ilvm.org/docs/TableGen/index.html
 - Ilvm.org/docs/TableGen/BackEnds.html

Describing registers with TableGen

- TableGen provides the 'Register' class
 - Can use the 'HWEncoding' field for encodings

```
class LEGReg<bits<16> Enc, string n> : Register<n> {
   Let HWEncoding = Enc;
   let Namespace = "LEG";
}

def R0 : LEGReg< 0, "r0" >;
   ...
   def SP : LEGReg< 10, "sp" >;
        LEGRegisterInfo.td
```

Referenced as "LEG::RO" in C++

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Describing registers with TableGen

Can automate trivial definitions

```
foreach i = 0-9 in {
  def R#i : R<i, "r"#i>;
}
LEGRegisterInfo.td
```

Group registers into register classes

Calling convention lowering: TableGen

```
def CC_LEG : CallingConv<[
    // Promote i8/i16 arguments to i32
    CCIfType<[i8, i16], CCPromoteToType<i32>>,

    // The first 4 arguments are passed in registers
    CCIfType<[i32], CCAssignToReg<[R0, R1, R2, R3]>>,

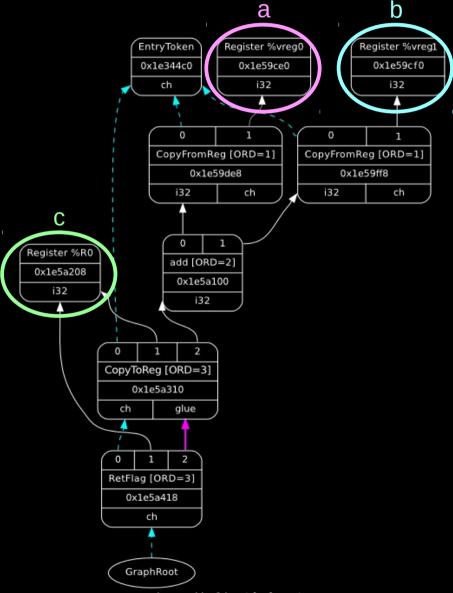
    // Fall-back, and use the stack
    CCIfType<[i32], CCAssignToStack<4, 4>>
]>;
    LEGCallingConv.td
```

 Generates functions used in ISelLowering via function pointers.

Calling convention lowering: The big picture

```
define i32 @foo(i32 %a, i32 %b) {
    %c = add nsw i32 %a, %b
    ret i32 %c
}
ex1.11
```

- Two target hooks:
 - LowerFormalArguments()
 - LowerReturn()



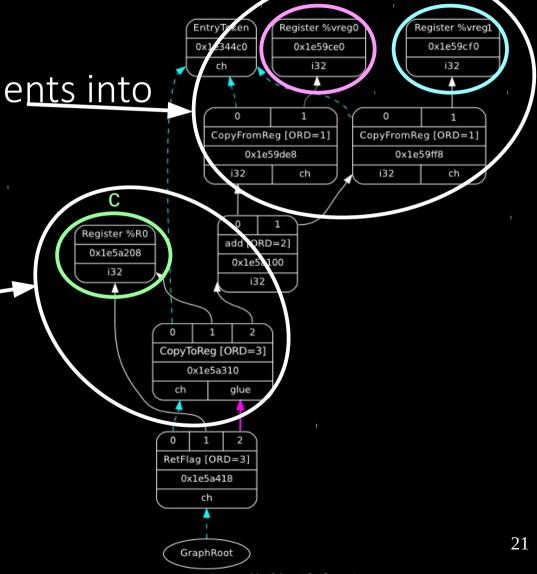
Calling convention lowering: The big picture

LowerFormalArguments()

 Lowers incoming arguments into the DAG

LowerReturn()

 Lowers outgoing return values into the DAG



a

Calling convention lowering: LowerFormalArguments()

- Assigns locations to arguments, according to the TableGen-defined calling convention
- Creates DAG nodes for each location:
 - Registers: CopyFromReg nodes
 - Stack: frame indices and stack loads

Calling convention lowering: LowerReturn()

- Similar to LowerFormalArguments(), but the other way around
- Define another, 'RetCC_LEG', TableGen calling convention
- Call 'AnalyzeReturn()' with it
- Walk the return value locations and issue DAG nodes
- Return LEGISD::RET instruction

Calling convention lowering: LowerCall()

- Hybrid of LowerFormalArguments() and LowerReturn()
- Not explicitly covered here

Describing instructions: Overview

- Let's start with a simple instruction: ADDrr
- Define it in lib/Target/LEG/LEGInstrInfo.td
- What we need to specify:
 - Operands
 - Assembly string
 - Instruction pattern

Describing instructions: Operands

- List of definitions or outputs ('outs')
- List of uses or inputs ('ins')
- Operand class:
 - Register class (e.g. GRRegs)
 - Immediate (e.g. i32imm)
 - More complex operands (e.g. reg + imm for load/store)

Describing instructions: Selection Patterns

- Matches nodes in the SelectionDAG
 - Nodes get turned into MachineInstrs during ISel
 - If pattern is omitted, selection needs to be done in C++
- Syntax:
 - One pair of parenthesis defines one node
 - Nodes have DAG operands, with 'MVT' type (e.g. i32)
 - Map DAG operands to MI operands

Describing instructions: Result

- This is what we get after defining the pattern:
- Assembly was generated by the instruction printer
 - More on this later

```
# BB#0:  # %entry add r0, r0, r1  # xentry ex1.s
```

Constants

Compiling this IR produces the following error:

```
%2 = add nsw i32 %1, 2
ex2.11
```

```
LLVM ERROR: Cannot select: 0x29d4350: i32 = Constant<2> [ID=2]
In function: main
```

- Specify how to generate ('materialize') constants
- For example, with a 'move' instruction
 - E.g. MOVW on ARM for 16-bit constants

Constants

• Let's define this move instruction:

The previous example translates to:

```
movw r1, #2
add r0, r0, r1
ex2-ADDrr-MOVW.s
```

Constants

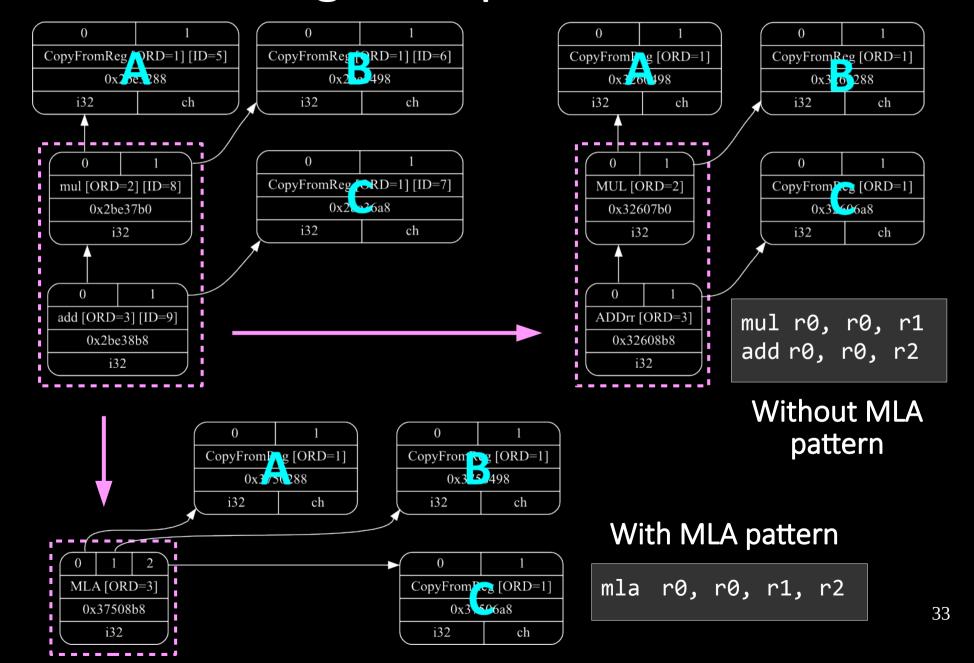
• What if instructions take immediates?

```
add r0, r0, #2
ex2-ADDri.s
```

Matching multiple DAG nodes

- DAG nodes can be nested inside selection patterns
 - The output of one node is the input of another
- Allows operations to be combined
 - Reduces the number of generated instructions
 - Possibly improves performance or power consumption
- Example: multiply and add instruction (ex3.ll)

Matching multiple DAG nodes



Frame lowering

- Hooks invoked when values are stored on the stack
 - In debug builds (-00), but not only
- Adjust the stack at the beginning ('prologue') and end ('epilogue') of functions
 - LEGFrameLowering::emitPrologue()
 - LEGFrameLowering::emitEpilogue()
- Usually by increasing or decreasing the stack pointer
- May need to align the stack pointer too

Frame lowering

Example that uses the stack:

```
%p = alloca i32, align 4
store i32 2, i32* %p
%b = load i32* %p, align 4
%c = add nsw i32 %a, %b
ex4.11
```

Output when compiled with -O2:

```
sub sp, sp, #4
movw r1, #2
str r1, [sp]
add r0, r0, #2
add sp, sp, #4
    ; epilogue

ex4-02.s
```

Frame lowering

- When compiling with -O0, hooks need to be defined
- Emit load/store instructions with frame indices
- Minimal implementation:

```
// LEGInstrInfo::storeRegToStackSlot()
BuildMI(MBB, I, I->getDebugLoc(), get(LEG::STR))
    .addReg(SrcReg, getKillRegState(KillSrc))
    .addFrameIndex(FrameIndex).addImm(0);

// LEGInstrInfo::loadRegFromStackSlot()
BuildMI(MBB, I, I->getDebugLoc(), get(LEG::LDR), DestReg)
    .addFrameIndex(FrameIndex).addImm(0);

// LEGInstrInfo::copyPhysReg()
BuildMI(MBB, I, I->getDebugLoc(), get(LEG::MOVrr), DestReg)
    .addReg(SrcReg, getKillRegState(KillSrc));
```

- New classes:
 - LEGAsmPrinter
 - LEGMCInstLower
 - An MCAsmStreamer (usually stock)
 - LEGInstPrinter
- LEGAsmPrinter works as a gateway to the streamers
- This stages works with MCInsts, lowered from MachineInstrs by LEGMCInstLower

TableGen provides the 'AsmString' field:

```
class InstLEG<..., string asmstr> : Instruction {
  let AsmString = asmstr;
  ...
}
LEGInstrFormats.td
```

LEGInstPrinter::printOperand will be called on each operand

 LEGInstPrinter::printOperand is given the stream to print to.

```
void LEGInstPrinter::printOperand(const MCInst *MI, unsigned No,
                                    raw ostream &O) {
  const MCOperand &Op = MI->getOperand(No);
  if (Op.isReg()) {
    // TableGen generates this function for us from
    // LEGRegisterInfo.td
    0 << getRegisterName(Op.getReg());</pre>
    return;
  if (Op.isImm()) {
    0 << '#' << Op.getImm();</pre>
    return;
                                                        LEGInstPrinter.cpp
```

```
.text
    .file
           "foo.11"
    .globl foo
          foo,@function
    .type
foo:
                                           # @foo
# BB#0:
                                           # %entry
   add r0, r0, r1
   b lr
.Ltmp0:
          foo, .Ltmp0-foo
    .size
                                                                       ex1.s
```

- That's it!
- Directives & labels handled for us
 - Can emit target-specific syntax if we wish

Part 3

How-to for specific tasks

- A few new classes:
 - LEGAsmBackend
 - LEGMCCodeEmitter
 - LEGObjectWriter
 - An MCObjectStreamer (again, stock)
- You will also need your LEGAsmPrinter

Example encoding:

31 28	27 25	2421	20	19 16	15 12	11 4	3 0
1110	000	opcode	0	src1	dst	00000000	src2

How can we achieve this?

TableGen recognises the 'Inst' field:

```
class InstLEG< ... > : Instruction {
  field bits<32> Inst;
  ...
}
LEGInstrFormats.td
```

 Used to define the binary encoding of each instruction in TableGen:

```
def ADDrr : InstLEG< ... > {
  let Inst{31-25} = 0b110000;
  let Inst{24-21} = 0b1100;  // Opcode
  let Inst{20} = 0b0;
  let Inst{11-4} = 0b00000000;
}
```

 For operand-based encoding, need bit fields with the same names as the operands:

 LEGMCCodeEmitter::getMachineOpValue() will be called on each operand

• Returns the encoding of each operand...

...placed, masked, and shifted into position

Relocations and fixups

• For values that require fixing up, record the relocation into Fixups and return zero.

```
unsigned LEGMCCodeEmitter::
getMachineOpValue(const MCInst &MI, const MCOperand MO,
                  SmallVectorImpl<MCFixup> &Fixups,
                  const MCSubtargetInfo &STI) const {
 assert(MO.isExpr()); // MO must be an expression
 const MCExpr *Expr = MO.getExpr();
 const MCExpr::ExprKind Kind = Expr->getFixupKind();
  Fixups.push_back(MCFixup::Create(0, Expr, Kind));
 return 0;
                                                  LEGMCCodeEmitter.cpp
```

Relocations and fixups

Defining a target-specific fixup:

```
enum Fixups {
    fixup_leg_pcrel = FirstTargetFixupKind,

    LastTargetFixupKind,
    NumTargetFixupKinds = LastTargetFixupKind - FirstTargetFixupKind
};
```

Relocations and fixups

- We must then implement some hooks
- These are called at the end once the section layouts have been finalized
- LEGAsmBackend::processFixupValue()
 - Adjusts the fixup value, e.g., splitting the value across non-contiguous fields
- LEGAsmBackend::applyFixup()
 - Patches the fixed-up value into the binary stream

Custom Selection DAG nodes

- To represent target-specific operations in the DAG
 - Example: 32-bit immediate move on ARM
- Add a value in the LEGISD enum
- Add to LEGTargetLowering::getTargetNodeName()
- Add TableGen node definition:

Custom DAG lowering

- To implement an operation in a more efficient way
 - E.g. by replacing it with a custom DAG node
- To work around target limitations
 - E.g. by replacing it with multiple DAG nodes
- Add support to LEGISelLowering::LowerOperation
- Set the operation action to 'custom' on given type:

```
LEGISelLowering::LEGISelLowering(...) {
   (...)
   setOperationAction(ISD::GlobalAddress, MVT::i32, Custom);
}
LEGISelLowering.cpp
```

Creating SelectionDAG nodes

- Simply call DAG.getNode() with these arguments:
 - Node ID (e.g. LEGISD::MOVi32), type, operand(s)
- Nodes are target-independent (ISD) or not (LEGISD)
- Use DAG.getMachineNode() in LEGISeIDAGToDAG

- Example: implement 32-bit immediate load with high/low pairs:
 - MOVW: load 16-bit 'low' immediate and clear high 16 bits
 - MOVT: load 16-bit 'high' immediate
- The final value is defined by the second instruction
- Different ways to implement this:
 - At the DAG level, in LEGISelDAGToDAG.cpp
 - Using a pseudo-instruction (placeholder)

- The two instructions must be ordered:
 - Because MOVW clears the high 16 bits
 - Achieved by having MOVT reading MOVW's output
- Source and destination registers must be the same
 - Use 'Constraints' in Tablegen (unless using pseudo)

- Define a pseudo instruction, can be selected from the custom DAG node we previously defined
- The pseudo is lowered by a target hook

```
bool LEGInstrInfo::expandPostRAPseudo(MI) {
   if (MI->getOpcode() != LEG::MOVi32) return false;
   BuildMI(..., get(LEG::MOVWi16), Dst).addImm(Lo);
   BuildMI(..., get(LEG::MOVTi16), Dst).addReg(Dst).addImm(Hi);
   MBB.erase(MI);
   return true;
}
LEGInstrInfo.cpp
```

• Example IR:

```
define i32 @foo(i32 %a) #0 {
    %c = add nsw i32 %a, 65537 ; 0x00010001
    ret i32 %c
}
ex5.11
```

```
; We want to write 0x00010001 to the register.
; Each instruction writes half of the value (16 bits)
movw r1, #1 ; Write 0x00000001 (write low bits, clear high bits)
movt r1, #1 ; Write 0x0001XXXX (write high bits, don't touch low bits)
add r0, r0, r1
b lr
ex5.s
```

Part 4

Troubleshooting and resources

When something goes wrong

- Find which pass introduces the issue:
 - Ilc -print-after-all
- Find the LLVM source file and category for this pass:
 - #define DEBUG_TYPE "codegen-dce"
- Dump the log:
 - Ilc foo.ll -debug-only codegen-dce 2>&1 > foo.log
- Compare (diff) the '-print-after-all' or '-debug-only' good and bad outputs to see where it goes wrong

Debugging LLVM

- MIs, BBs, functions, almost anything \rightarrow call X.dump()
- DAGs, CFGs → call X.viewGraph() (pops up xdot)
- Or from the terminal: Ilc foo.ll-view-isel-dags
 - Try -view-dag1-combine-dags, -view-legalize-dags, -view-sched-dags, etc.
- To view graphs, make sure you build LLVM in debug mode!
 - Turn on LLVM_ENABLE_ASSERTIONS (i.e. NDEBUG should not be defined)

"Cannot select"

- When LLVM doesn't know how to map ('lower') a DAG node to an actual instruction
 - Missing pattern in LEGInstrInfo.td?
 - Without a pattern, lowering needs to be done in LEGISeIDAGToDag::Select()
- Check the graph!

The dog ate my homework

- Why did my code disappear?
 - Missing chain/glue in the DAG
 - Dead code elimination may have removed it
- DCE does not touch instructions whose value is used by other instructions:
 - Root your use/def chains using a MI that has side-effects
- DCE does not touch instructions with side-effects:
 - mayLoad, mayStore, isTerminator, hasSideEffects

Useful in-tree resources

- include/llvm/Target/Target*.h
 - Shows all target-specific hooks that can be overridden, with useful comments
- include/llvm/Target/Target*.td
 - Shows all TableGen fields you can use in your target files
- include/Ilvm/CodeGen/ISDOpcodes.h
 - Lists all SelectionDAG nodes and descriptions of what they mean

You're not alone!

- "Writing an LLVM Backend" at Ilvm.org/docs/WritingAnLLVMBackend.html
- Other backends
- TableGen backend documentation
- LLVM-Dev mailing lists
- Anton Korobeynikov's 2009 and 2012 "Building a backend in 24 hours" tutorials

Summary

- Should be enough to create a very simple target!
- Many things were not covered in this talk:
 - Using different types and legalization
 - Scheduling
 - Intrinsics
 - **–** ...
- Introduced resources to go further

Thank you!

- Q&A
- Happy to answer questions by email too:
 - fraser@codeplay.com
 - pierre-andre@codeplay.com
- Check out our code from GitHub:
 - github.com/frasercrmck/llvm-leg