ECSE 323 - Digital System Design
After Action Report - The Dealer Finite State Machine

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Part I

A Pleasant Preamble

Sometimes in life one may be presented with situations that make him rethink his beliefs and question who, in fact, he really is. It is moments like such that actually define an individual *ad postremum*. Of course, it is up to the individual in question to *realize* that he shall be withdrawing cathexis from the myriad objects of empirical reality around him if enlightenment should be obtained. People that occasionally experience this enlightenment are called patricians. Those who continuously experience this enlightenment are called Engineers.

Consider the infamous game of Blackjack. Some may enjoy this game as a nice way to pass the time, others may be violently obsessed with it. Regardless of who is playing, the game can only be played reliably when players understand and follow the rules and when a credible dealer is present. Naturally, the players are needed for the game to be played, and of course the game is only really *being played* when the rules are followed. The presence of the dealer, however, is far more interesting than what the uninformed reader may believe.

Some say the dealer's job is to deal the cards, but that is a vast and decadent oversimplification. Sure, the dealer *should* deal the cards (at the appropriate times, that is), but the dealer is also responsible for establishing structure and ensuring that the game does not get out of hand. In fact, the rules of the game themselves have their strings pulled by the dealer.
But some dealers do not follow the rules.

It is no longer news that the goal of these laboratory sessions is to build a *crazy eights* game, and not a Blackjack game. Although the rules of the two games are different, both take on the rules-dealer paradigm of gameplay. The layman, and even the patrician, may focus on the rules of the game principally. However, as Engineers, the main focus of this laboratory was to create not just a functional dealer, but a reliable, ethical, and ultimately compliant dealer. As shown later in this report, this was successfully accomplished due to the design of a clever *finite state machine*, a construct that has also been used in the design of underwhelming robots.

In the interest of moral behavior, it would be unethical to display the accomplishments of this laboratory session without giving due credit to the Altera Quartus II and Modelsim software, whose magical functionalities allow such complex designs to be mapped onto an FPGA. Also, with such great text editing accomodations and incredible timing simulation tools, the development of this system was dream-like.

At this stage, the reader is invited to explore the remainder of this report, which will go through in a (hopefully) simple and organized manner the discoveries made during this laboratory session. Beyond that, this report will discuss *how* these discoveries were made, and how they were reinforced, so the reader may gain intuition on developing state of the art digital systems.

Please enjoy the remainder of this report, and try to learn something from it. Much is to be gained by grasping the concepts of the rules-dealer paradigm, as they apply to more in life than simply digital systems and card games. To conclude this pleasant preamble, the reader is encouraged to, above all, *have fun* with this report, and better yet, to have fun with life. Finally, it is important to remember that while by law a man is guilty for violating the rules, in ethics a man is guilty merely by *considering* such violation. Be careful, be wise, and Baba Booey to all.

Part II

The Dealer Circuit

Introduction

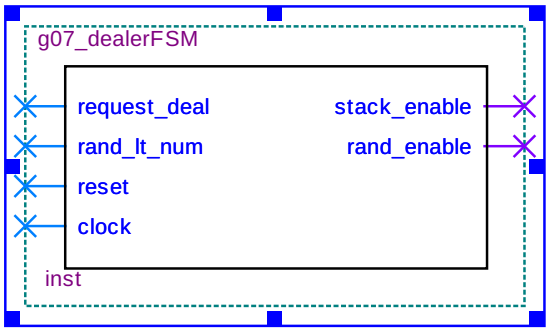
As foreshadowed in the pleasant preamble above, having a loyal, dependable dealer will be crucial to the reliable functionality of the crazy eights system. Without such a dealer, the *rules* of the game *may not* be followed, causing complete and utter pandemonium, ultimately resulting in a rather atrocious crazy eights game.

Therefore, it would benefit the system to create a robust *finite state machine*, a machine of a finite number of states. The system was reduced to a machine of 4 states (where $4 < \infty$ holds), representing the state which waits for the previous request to end (denoted by A), the state which waits for the next request to *be* sent (denoted by B), the state which generates random numbers, so as to deal the cards (denoted by C), and finally, the state that activates a stack (or more accurately, a bi-directional Jenga tower) circuit (denoted by D).

All of the cleverness and power that has been teased above was encompassed by a circuit that has since been named the `g07_dealerFSM`. A more detailed insight to the design of the finite state machine and the `g07_dealerFSM` follows below, and is complemented by thoughtful pictorial support for easier understanding.

Circuit Description

Figure 1: Pin-out diagram of the `g07_dealerFSM` circuit



Above is a pin-out diagram of the miraculous `g07_dealerFSM` circuit, showcasing its input and output ports. A more detailed description of these ports will be given below.

Description of ports

request_deal

The `request_deal` input bit is activated when the system requests that the dealer should deal a card.

rand_lt_num

The `rand_lt_num` input bit is controlled by an external circuit that is high when a random number has a value that is less than the BJT's `NUM` output that the dealer is associated with. This allows the dealer to tell whether it should keep generating random numbers (in state C), or move on.

reset

The `reset` input bit causes the finite state machine to be reset to its initial state when `reset` is high. It is asynchronous.

stack_enable

The `stack_enable` output bit is active when a valid random number has been generated in the proper state. It is used to enable the BJT associated with the dealer to pop a card.

rand_enable

The rand_enable output bit is active after request_deal has been asserted anew, and enables a random number generator to generate random numbers until rand_lt_num is high.

A complete VHDL description of the g07_dealerFSM circuit is provided in the following section.

VHDL portrayal of the g07_dealerFSM circuit

```
1  library ieee;
2  use ieee.std_logic_1164.all;
3  use ieee.numeric_std.all;
4
5  entity g07_dealerFSM is
6          port (
7                  request_deal: in std_logic;
8                  rand_lt_num: in std_logic;
9                  reset: in std_logic;
10                 clock: in std_logic;
11                 stack_enable: out std_logic;
12                 rand_enable: out std_logic
13         );
14 end g07_dealerFSM;
15
16 architecture machineOfState of g07_dealerFSM is
17         SIGNAL initial_seed: std_logic_vector(31 downto 0) := std_logic_vector(
               to_unsigned(1337,32));
18         SIGNAL random: std_logic_vector(31 downto 0);
19         SIGNAL reg_out: std_logic_vector(5 downto 0);
20         SIGNAL comp_lt: std_logic;
21         SIGNAL stack_num: std_logic_vector(5 downto 0);
22
23         TYPE State_type is (A,B,C,D);
24         SIGNAL state: State_Type;
25 begin
26         rand_enable <= '1' when state = C else '0';
27         stack_enable <= '1' when state = D else '0';
28         machine: process (clock, reset)
29         begin
30                 if(reset = '1') then state <= A;
31                 elsif (clock'event and clock = '1') then
32                         case state is
33                                 WHEN A =>
34                                         if(request_deal = '0') then state <= B;
35                                         else state <= A;
36                                         end if;
37                                 WHEN B =>
38                                         if(request_deal = '0') then state <= B;
39                                         else state <= C;
40                                         end if;
41                                 WHEN C =>
42                                         if(rand_lt_num = '0') then state <= C;
```

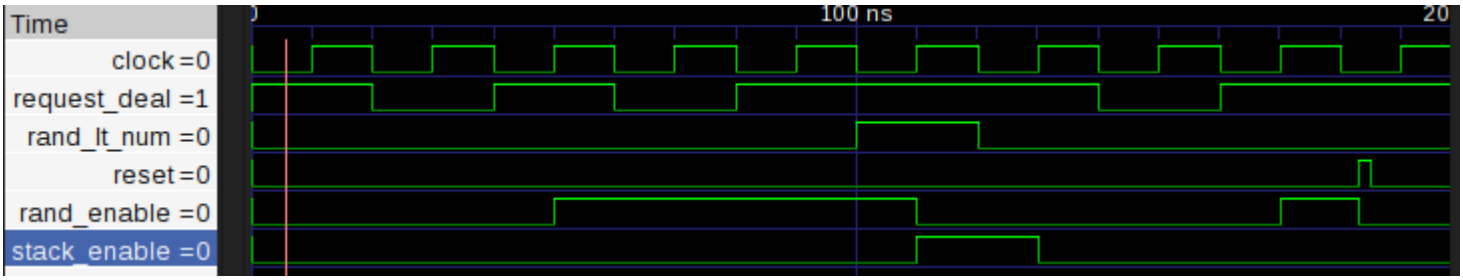
```
43                                          else state <= D;
44                                          end if;
45                                  WHEN D =>
46                                          state <= A;
47                          end CASE;
48                  end if;
49          end process machine;
50  end machineOfState;
```

On the Testing of the Dealer Circuit

It was an important and difficult challenge to resist being seduced by the beauty of the VHDL code that describes the `g07_dealerFSM` circuit. Despite it's beauty, a dealer cannot be trusted without being tested. Think about this following section as an analog to an interview process, if you will. Before putting the `g07_dealerFSM` in commission, it was important to make sure it satisfied all dealing requirements (and boy, did it ever), and to make sure it functioned correctly on the hardware. The demonstrations that follow will prove that the `g07_dealerFSM` is in fact an excellent candidate.

The software circuit simulation: A poor man's analysis

The first order of business in judging the effectiveness of the `g07_dealerFSM` was to test it with the magical Modelsim simulator. Unfortunately, said software was not functioning to the tester's standards. As a consequence, the miraculous GtkWave VCD viewer came to the rescue, and the `g07_dealerFSM` was examined thoroughly according to a carefully-written testbench.
For the less-enthused, the testbench starts the state machine in its default state, and examines each state transition in the trivial order. Then, the machine is brought to state C (where `rand_enable` is high) and reset is activated to ensure that it causes the machine to return to its initial state.
The resulting waveforms can be viewed below.



Of course, the results shown above cannot conclusively confirm the excellence of the `g07_dealerFSM` circuit on their own, because they give no evidence of the dealer functioning on real hardware. Hence, this test was called a *poor man's analysis*. Fortunately, the testers *are not* poor men. In fact, they have access to an Altera DE1 FPGA development board equipped with an Altera Cyclone II FPGA. The tests in the following section will describe how *full confidence* of the `g07_dealerFSM` was obtained.

The hardware circuit simulation: an Engineer's victory

Some tests are easy, leaving the participants in a relaxing state of mind. Yet, some tests are hard, leaving participants in a state of panic. However, occasionally tests reach a transcending level of difficulty, such that it may be said that the test *separates the boys from the men*. That, dear reader, is what you will witness in the remainder of this section. Anyone from laymen to patricians can make a software circuit simulation, neglecting the possiblity that something may go wrong on the hardware. While seemingly reasonable to the un-seasoned tester, this train of thought is highly dangerous and irresponsible. It is up to the Engineer to realize that this, in fact, will not suffice. This realization was exhibited, more than anything else, in the results below.

The first order of business was to create a *test bed*, or circuit that bridges the gap between human input and dealer communication. This was done using the not-short-of-incredible Altera Quartus II schematic designer, and can be seen below:

Appendix A

VHDL Testbench for the `g07_dealerFSM`

```
1  library ieee;
2  use ieee.std_logic_1164.all;
3  use ieee.numeric_std.all;
4
5  entity dealerFSM_tst is
6  end;
7
8  architecture test of dealerFSM_tst is
9          component g07_dealerFSM
10                 port (
11                         request_deal: in std_logic;
12                         rand_lt_num: in std_logic;
13                         reset: in std_logic;
14                         clock: in std_logic;
15                         stack_enable: out std_logic;
16                         rand_enable: out std_logic
17                 );
18         end component;
19         SIGNAL request_deal, rand_lt_num, reset, stack_enable, rand_enable:
               std_logic;
20         SIGNAL clock: std_logic := '0';
21         SIGNAL finished: std_logic := '0';
22
23 begin
24         machine: g07_dealerFSM
25         port map (
26                 request_deal => request_deal,
27                 rand_lt_num => rand_lt_num,
28                 reset => reset,
29                 clock => clock,
30                 stack_enable => stack_enable,
31                 rand_enable => rand_enable
32         );
33
34         clock <= '0' when finished = '1' else not clock after 10 ns;
35
36         always: process
37         begin
38                 request_deal <= '1';
39                 rand_lt_num <= '0';
40                 reset <= '0';
```

```
41                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
42                  request_deal <= '0';
43                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
44                  request_deal <= '1';
45                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
46                  request_deal <= '0';
47                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
48                  request_deal <= '1';
49                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
50                  rand_lt_num <= '1';
51                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
52                  rand_lt_num <= '0';
53                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
54                  request_deal <= '0';
55                  WAIT FOR 20 ns;
56                  request_deal <= '1';
57                  WAIT FOR 23 ns;
58                  reset <= '1';
59                  WAIT FOR 2 ns;
60                  reset <= '0';
61                  WAIT FOR 15 ns;
62                  finished <= '1';
63                  WAIT;
64          end process always;
65  end test;
```