

Puzzled by strange behavior

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In my house now are three Pentium towers.

Comp. A: 1.5 GHz, 32 MB RAM, 40 GB HD
Comp. B: 1.5 GHz, 128 MB RAM, 40 GB HD
Comp. C: 551 MHz, 128 MB RAM, 200 GB HD

A & B are identical except for memory. C is earlier model, same mfg.

A & B had XP Home, C had XP Pro.

About the time I bought C, an inexperienced widow asked me to update A & B as it had not been done since her husband died.

Windows update choked and damaged a file. Since the owner did not know where her husband had put the CDs and product keys, I decided to try to replace the file by mounting the HD as slave in the good system. Unfortunately, due to the similarities of the three machines, I confused which was which and made things worse. Add bad advice from Microsoft Tech support, and other screwups best skipped over for brevity, I ended up with one HD unable to even get safe mode and two that would boot but weren't legal.

Finally, the lady found her CDs and product keys. I had no personal stuff yet on my new machine, so I reinstalled the correct version of Windows on each machine.

A & B have since been through four or five windows update cycles to bring them up-to-date. During the update processes, I frequently defragmented. (Windows Update creates MAJOR fragmentation!)

C took only two as it already had service pack two. I then defragmented, then installed Office, activated and upgraded that.

Defragged, then installed SQL Express and Visual Studio Express.
Defragged, then installed FireFox and Opera. Defragged again and went through update cycles until no more updates were available.

I only had one ethernet port available on the router, so all installs and updates used the same connection. The router's firewall is at max paranoia—port scans from outside find absolutely nothing.

