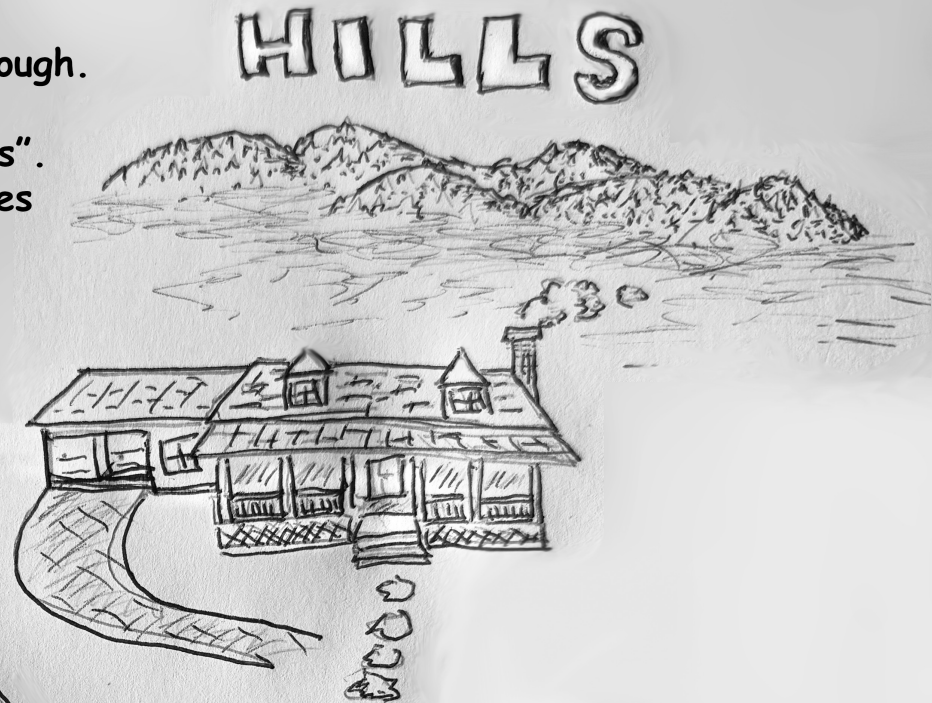


Once upon a time ...

there were two families that lived about two miles from one another.

Things were good! Well.... good enough.

These homes were more than "homes". They were citadels - large structures at entrances that guarded against invaders!!



One citadel guarded the gates to "The Hills", a community of high people that like to look down on the world (but not in a bad way).

The other citadel guarded the gates to a hallowed grounds - the "Great PPG"! The elders longed for PPG. But it was gone.

This guardian was known as "The Hospital".

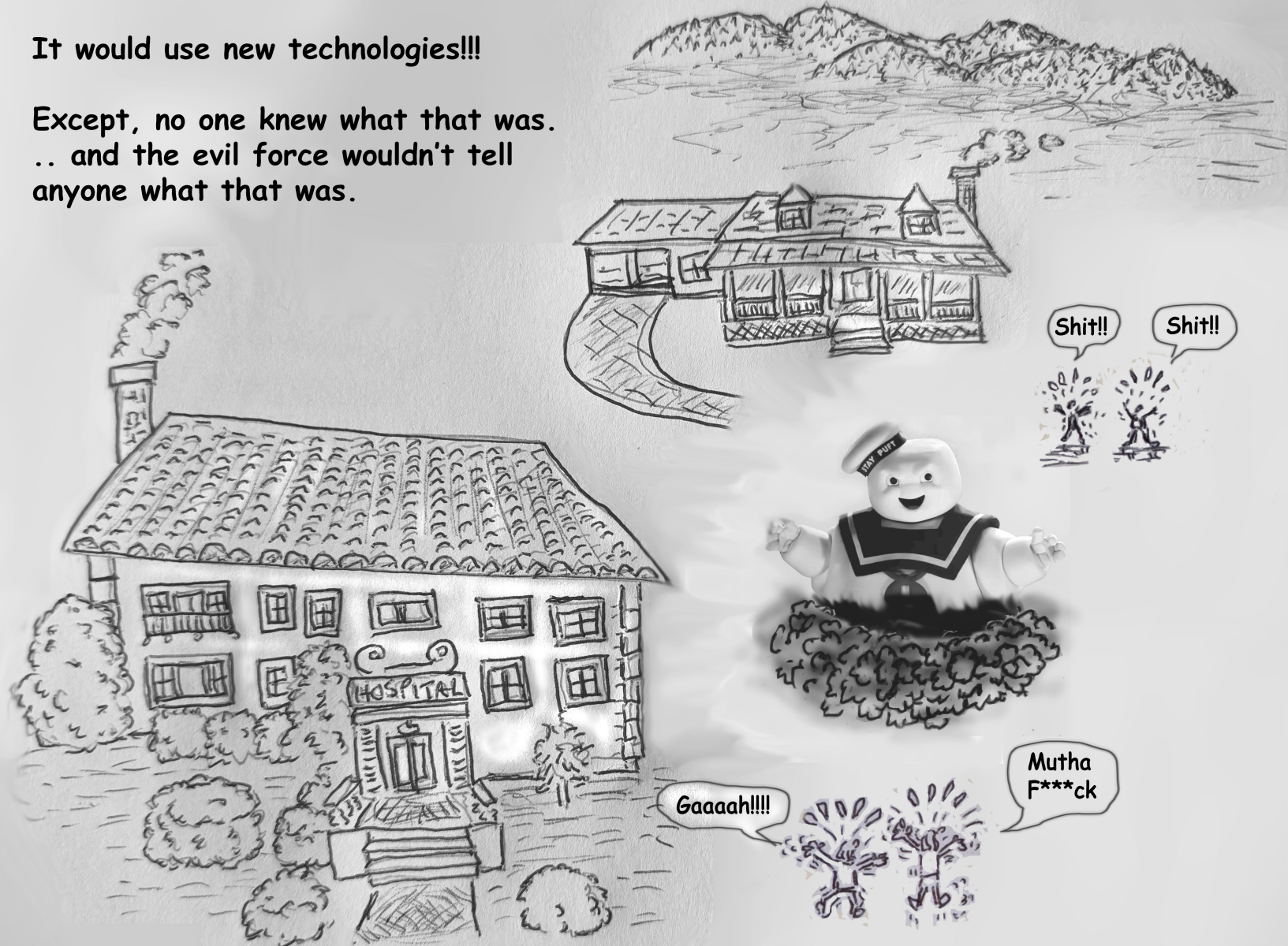
Then one day an evil force descended upon the land,
secretly claiming that it would build a new PPG,
creating prosperity for everyone!

It wouldn't use traditional methods of
burning the earth to create the product.

It would use new technologies!!!

Except, no one knew what that was.
.. and the evil force wouldn't tell
anyone what that was.

HILLS



There was also a rich king, known as the *Cave King*, that hated the evil force. He quickly caused havoc and urged the two fortresses to join him to fight.

The *Cave King* was considered the king of The Hills. He became king because he owned the earth under the hills.

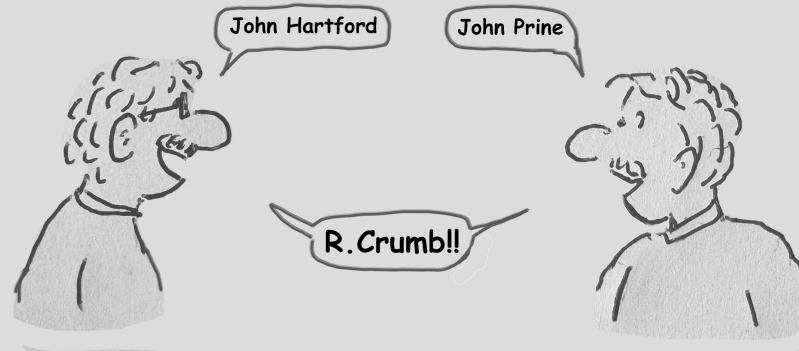
The *Cave King* organized a large group of opponents against the evil force. He gathered money from them and made the group work for him.



There were many, many battles. Over time, the two fortresses grew close.

They soon found out that they had many things in common. Their names were even similar. For example, both men of the fortresses were named "William". But neither of them were known for their real names.

They were known as "Brent of the Hills" and "Jack of the Hospital".



But there were also fundamental differences between the two. Brent of the Hills was a master airplane mechanic and a veteran of the Vietnam War. He was not working anymore due to a life-threatening battle early in his career.

Jack of the Hospital was a senior software architect with no military experience. He had a job that demanded constant travel and most of his time.

They often pondered who was better off - someone with the time and the means to enjoy leisure, but with limitations that restrict some basic human functions or, someone with no time that was able to function without restrictions?



After some time the war known as The Smelter War was declared a draw.

The Evil Force was not defeated. It withdrew for many years. But it still lurked in the dark waiting for another opportunity to destroy the land.



February 13, 2024 (altered to prevent trauma)

In the mean time, that didn't stop the two fortresses from other adventures. They traveled together to many far away places. Their shared love of nature and music led them to be charter supporters of the John Hartford Memorial Festival that they attended for almost 10 years!



They even experienced the worst health crisis in 100 years.
The two fortresses did their best to keep from spreading the virus
by adhering to a strict social bubble.



Thanksgiving, 2020

Still, they enjoyed the serenity of those years. They often
pondered the wonders of science and discussed the absurdity of
modern politics and social matters.

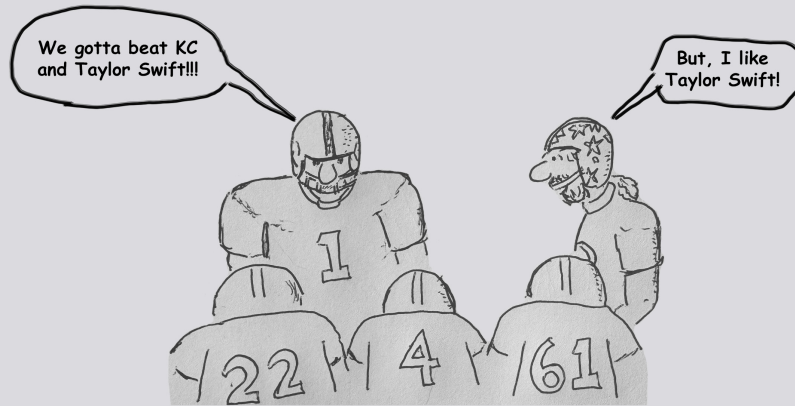
They thought and thought so much that their hair grew long and gray. Since there was so much thought going on, they considered themselves to be the "Beards of Knowledge".



December, 2021

They soon figured out that the strategy of "waiting for the world to change" only works if you have an unlimited amount of time. And there's a very real possibility that the changes may not happen in their generation.

That's what it's all about though isn't it? You can only accomplish so much. You only have so much time. So, you can only live in the moment. For "the moment" is the only real thing that you have.



In the end, it's not what you've accomplished that's important. It's really whether or not you feel good about what you've done and that you've always tried to do the right thing. You can only hope that you've had some positive effect on others so that they can carry on.



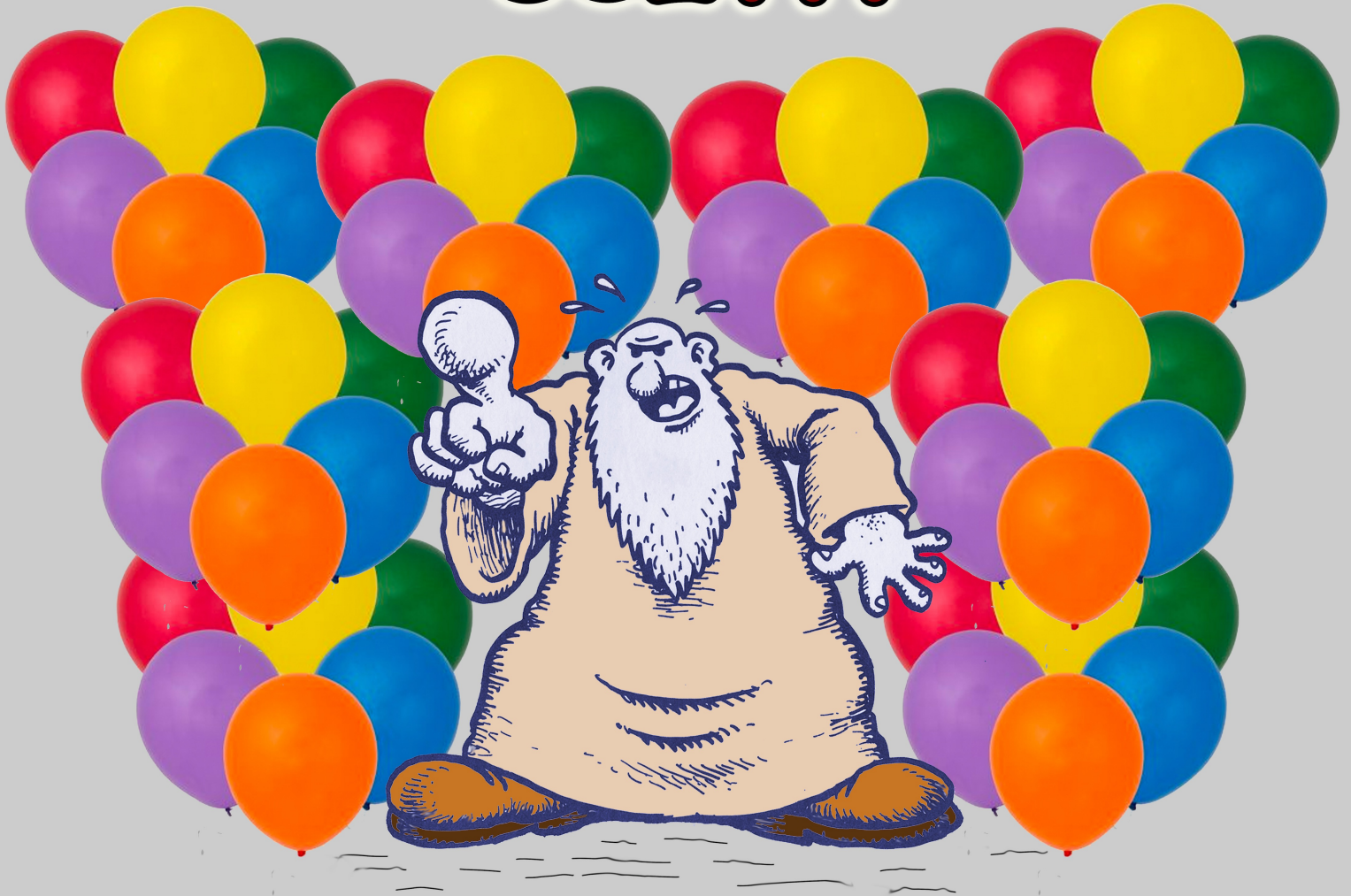
Tommy Emmanuel and Parker Hastings
February 13, 2024

That is not the end of the story. The story never ends. Don't you remember that weird fantasy movie from the 1980s that scared the shit out of our kids? (The Neverending Story, 1984)



But, what's REALLY IMPORTANT is stated by the wisest of us all...

**Mr. Natural
sez...**



**Happy Birthday
BRENT!!!**

