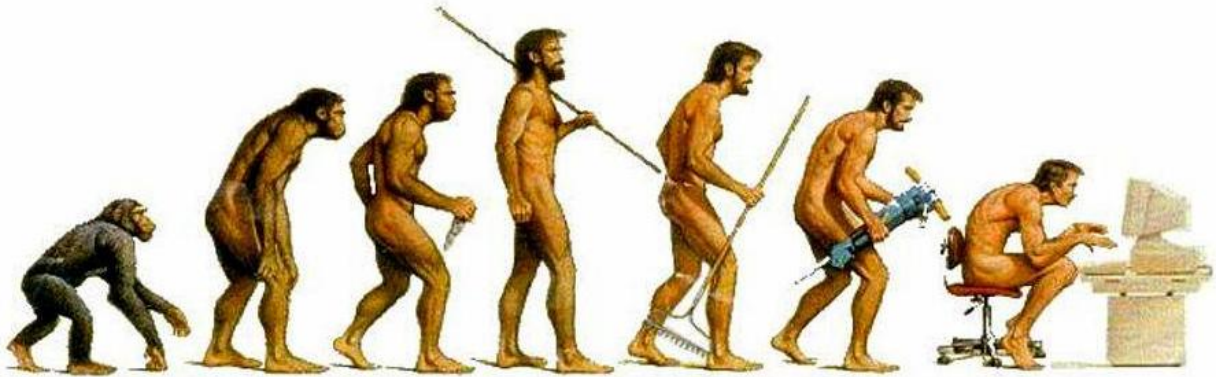




## CatchFire Café Newsletter

June 6, 2007

**CatchFire Café** is a science based motivation and training organization  
Featuring services and products dedicated to help people build better lives through  
Positive Energy, Healthy Lifestyles, and Laughter  
[www.catchfirecafe.com](http://www.catchfirecafe.com)



## The Unbending of America

I love this cartoon. Man ascending from ape to hunter with a spear; bending slightly with a rake; lower to jackhammer; and finally totally bent over (once again) as a servomechanism of the computer.

“We create our tools, thereafter they recreate us.” Marshall McLuhan’s dictum has special meaning when it comes to the computer, which as great as it is, returns us physically to *the bent people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*.

The computer extends our central nervous system out into the universe and our thoughts mingle together, almost simultaneously into the noosphere. (Metaphorically described by the Jesuit paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin as “layer of thoughts” hovering above the biosphere made possible by the web and satellite technology.) Such is the power of the web. At that time, however, in order to access that information technology we are paying a heavy physical price. We are spending hours bent over keyboard and mouse until we lose any semblance of a healthy posture.

Enter new (actually old) tools to reverse the process: yoga, pilates, and stretching. Any of you spending half or more of your day at a computer should take up the practice of yoga, pilates, or at least stretching a minimum of two times per week (along with your aerobic and strength training of course).

Aside from the physical challenge, we know from research in psychobiology that with a change in posture and lack of physical movement comes a change in biochemistry and therefore a downturn in mood and loss of positive energy...There goes our productivity, our creativity, our persistence, and worst of all, our level of fun.

### *What do we do to Unbend America?*

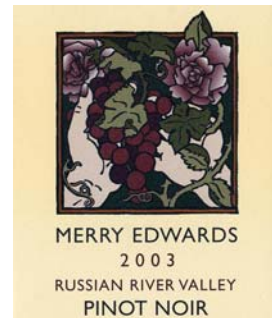
1. Buy an exercise ball to sit on at least for a few of your hours at the computer. It can strengthen your posture, you can stretch out on it intermittently and it's fun. (Like wearing an Hawaiian shirt; "You can't be angry while wearing an Hawaiian shirt," and you can't be moody on an exercise ball.)
2. Take 15 minute breaks and stretch or "walk proudly". We recommend 2 per day at approximately 10:30 am and approximately 2:30pm. The afternoon break is most important for getting ready for a strong finish of the work day. "The Fourth Quarter is Ours."
3. Sign up for a yoga or Pilates class – minimum 2 times a week – you will write me thank you notes for that.
4. Get an exercise physiologist to help you regain your posture
5. Remind yourself to walk like a champion. How can you be a winner if you walk like a loser?  
Laugh a minimum of 20 times per day. Your heart rate drops 5 to 20 beats per minute after a good laugh, and your stress level drops with your heart rate. After your laugh, straighten up your posture, and you're ready to take on the world and do your part in "*the unbending of America.*"

-By Peter McLaughlin,  
Founder of CatchFire Café

### *Wine Review: Merry Edwards Pinot Noir*

My favorite Pinot Noir outside of Oregon's Willamette Valley is the Merry Edwards Pinot from Sonoma. As always with a Pinot, one will find cherry flavor or black cherry fruit in both the bouquet and the wine itself. This 2003 goes beautifully with salmon; would also be nice with a filet mignon. Merry Edwards herself (she has a merry heart and a merry name) produces big, bold wines with fine finishes for long term savoring. The bottle scored 92 in the *Wine Spectator* and costs about \$34 in the store. Cheers.

-Our wine critic, Peter McLaughlin, was the owner of 2 wine stores and was the wine editor for the *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver



### *Film Review: God Grew Tired of Us*

Think about the conveniences of our life in the United States: refrigerators, flush toilets, central heating, supermarkets, public transportation, packaged food, cable television – all things that we use, but for the most part, never think about. The documentary **God Grew Tired of Us**, will, among other things, change that. It is by no means the central thesis of this film, but it's a running commentary, hilarious, yet poignant, of what it takes to survive in our culture, especially at the beginner's level.

This film is about the lost boys of Sudan. Most of us have glimpsed television news accounts or skimmed newspaper or magazine articles on the lost boys but have no idea how remarkable their story has been. However virtuous we may feel afterwards, this is not a do-gooder film. It's not a plea for action. It is not a case for better understanding among peoples. It's not a brief for change. At its most essential level, this documentary is about happiness. As Peter McLaughlin and the psychologist, Martin Seligman, will tell you, happiness derives from a sense of purpose and a sense of connection. The three young men from Sudan in this film depict happiness in ways their experience would never lead us to predict.

The title of the documentary is a quote from one of the young men, interviewed after a few

months of living in the United States, he reflects back on his life both in Sudan and then in a series of refugee camps in Kenya and elsewhere. Sudanese civil strife led to an order to kill all males over the age of 9, thus uprooting thousands of boys and young men from their rural villages. Scenes of this diaspora are interspersed throughout the film, as streams of boys flee down dusty roads to join what ultimately becomes a 1000-mile trek to safety in refugee camps. They leave behind families, serene rural life, and even identity for what becomes more than decade-long encampment. Most have little news and only distant memory of mothers, fathers, and sisters. As in Peter Pan, however, they become their own families.

A select few are eventually chosen for relocation from their refugee camp to the United States; and the three young men we follow to Syracuse, NY and Pittsburgh, PA are emblematic at this experience. Shown at one moment in tearful goodbyes in the parched Savannah of the refugee camp from which they depart, they find themselves the next moment only a couple of days later in urban America, being introduced to apartment living. In short order, they must negotiate the wonders of modern appliances including alarm clocks, vast supermarkets filled with strange foods, job searches in industries they could scarcely imagine, and a choice of winter clothes. On camera interviews over the course of their adjustment to America are initially tinged with the loneliness of separation from their homeland. As viewers, however, we also gradually become more conscious of the heavy responsibility they continue to bear -- they feel compelled to succeed on behalf of the family of lost brothers they have left behind. We begin to find ourselves with an entirely different, unexpected sense of these young men. It is not just compassion for their plight, it is not just admiration for their resilience, for lives lived in the moment, for a defining sense of purpose – it is envy. Three printed messages appear on the darkened screen at the end of this documentary. They reveal how things eventually turned out for each of the three lost boys. By then, we are not surprised.

*Our film critic, Steve Forness, Ph.D. was a professor and hospital school principal in the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute where several years ago, child and adolescent refugees from Central America were treated for post-traumatic stress and related disorders after civil wars in their country.*

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