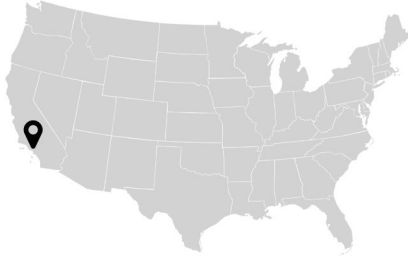




58 Pasadena, CA



“Oh, by the way.”

I was self-employed for 16 years. I did OK, but my legacy won't include any college business schools bearing my name.

I did learn a few things.

One of them being that hearing “Oh, by the way” late in negotiations isn't usually a good thing.

We had a training business and were talking with a new client.

We had locked down dates. Agreed on a price. And were happy to hear the venue - a small Christian college in Pasadena, California - actually had a few RV sites on campus. Long hotel stays weren't one of our favorite aspects of business travel.

But then I heard it.

“Oh, by the way, there will be a powwow of Christian American Indians going on while you are here. Hope that's ok?”

Oh?

I didn't really know how to respond.

We didn't know anything about powwows. We were intrigued by the intersection of Indian culture and Christian faith.

And?

We needed the money.

So we went.

We arrived as the powwow was getting started. Cars lined the streets. People crowded the vendor booths. Drums were already sounding.

We threaded the truck and RV into a full parking lot and through a little-used side gate. The spot wasn't much - just a gravel pad with hookups - but we were happy to have our home with us.

Once setup, curiosity took over. What actually happens at a powwow? We walked over. At the middle of the event was a large grass circle for the different dances.

We watched the Grand Entrance - when all the costumed dancers line up and make their way into the circle for the ceremonial beginning to the powwow.

After that there were ceremonial solo dances and social group dances. All were accompanied by a drum circle of 6-8 men.

Newbies like us, however, couldn't just jump into the group dances. You had to be invited in.

My son and I got into a conversation with a man who had the title of “Arena

Director.” William described his role as the Indian version of Head of Security.

He pulled us into the ring.

Our feet found common ground as we learned a simple two-step.

And our hearts found common ground as we shared our story.

We were nomads, at that time living without a permanent place to call home. We had packed up family, house



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and home. We often traveled to where the work was. Where the sustenance was.

For many Americans, that's nonsense. The American Dream is found safely inside the white pickets of a fence, not inside the white stripes of a highway.

As an American Indian though, William got it. His ancestors were nomadic. They often packed up family, house and home and moved to where the sustenance was.

We wrapped up our conversation. William wished us well. And he let us know that, now that we had been invited into the circle and learned the dance, we were welcome in the other group dances.

Indians and White people. Not always a history to be proud of there.

But on that little chunk of grass in

sunny Southern California, we had connected. We found shared experiences. We respected each other.

So we danced.

Best known for hosting the Rose Bowl, Pasadena was originally settled by the Hahamog-na tribe of Native Americans. Learn more at pasadenahistory.org.

Photos:

1. Beaded purses for sale.
2. The Boyink kids join an American Indian dance circle.
3. (This page) Other handmade items for sale at the powwow.

