

## Grapevine Online Exclusive

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# Web Exclusive: Home Group Mementos

## Identical leather bracelets serve as ties to a home group amongst fisherman in Mexico

Here I sit on an airplane flying home from Mexico and contemplating how hard it used to be to fly without drinking. This is only the second time in my adult life that I am in an airplane sober. I don't like to fly. It is the fourth of July. God willing and this plane lands safely, I will have eight months of sobriety tomorrow.



My daughter, Delaney, and I have spent a week in Puerto Vallarta traveling, vacationing, eating, swimming, shopping, and laughing, but not drinking. She just turned 21, and now she drinks alcohol and I don't. She hadn't seen me since I quit, so she couldn't quite fathom that I am an alcoholic.

As our city tour bus dropped us off at a tequila factory, and everyone got off the bus for free samples of 106 different brands of one hundred percent blue agave tequila, the smell burned my eyes, and Delaney asked, "You mean, you can't even have a taste?" "No," I said, "Not even a taste." She had never seen me drunk in her life, so I guess that the whole sobriety concept was perplexing to her. As the group drank their tequila, I moved out into the courtyard and wandered about taking pictures of slow turtles, colorful macaws, and enormous iguanas.

Back on the bus, I told Delaney about my last year of drinking. I told her

numerous stories of what had happened over the last year as she looked at me with a blank stare.

Then she asked, "Why did you do all those things?"

"Because I am an alcoholic," I said.

"Why didn't you stop"?, she asked.

"Because I didn't know how."

"You've changed," she said. "All you talk about is AA or the things people talk about in AA."

"Really?" I exclaimed. Of course, I think I talk about a wide variety of interesting things but perhaps I don't. She continued to look hard at me as if she could make sense of what I was saying by searching my eyes.

On the second to the last day of our vacation we took an all-day boat cruise filled almost solely with happy Mexican families on holiday. The cruise provided breakfast, lunch, sightseeing, snorkeling, an open bar, upbeat happy music, and dancing on our way to a beautiful white beach where most of the people, including myself, got off. The boat then went to a second smaller beach where a few others got off, and lastly, a speedboat took my daughter and four others to the farthest, smallest, most remote tiny beach that was only accessible by sea.

There, she told me later, was a woman with a small fruit stand and a man selling leather bracelets and necklaces. As she looked at his jewelry, the man told her in Spanish that he had to hurry because his group was waiting for him. She followed his glance and saw a few people in a little fishing boat. He then told her that he was with his AA group, pointing at his friends in the boat and then at his bracelet saying, "See, we all wear bracelets with the name of our home group on it, nothing else, just our home group." Delaney asked him if it was hard to stay sober in a country where there is so much beer and tequila and no legal drinking age. He replied, "No. We go to meetings, we pray, we help each other, and we wear our home group bracelets. AA works for us." The man picked up his bracelets and walked toward the boat.

So, in the middle of nowhere, on a secluded beach, in a foreign country, my daughter learned firsthand that AA is truly alive and at work everywhere, and that it's not just something that her Mom talks about too much.

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