

Opinion

President Fox on the road to Cancun

By Maria Elena Salinas

MEXICO CITY — Since the beginning of his presidency, Vicente Fox made reaching an immigration agreement with the United States his main foreign-policy objective. Just a few months before the end of his term, that agreement has yet to be reached. I asked the president of Mexico what happened to the infamous immigration agreement during an interview at the Los Pinos presidential residence in the Mexican capital. "We pushed and pushed and pushed, and we are now in the final phase," he responded.

In that final phase, the ball is in the United States Congress's court, said Fox. "We have done our homework, things have been documented, the information and the analyses are there." The Mexican president said the efforts of the past five years to promote change in U.S. immigration laws were not in vain, and he is optimistic that there will be closure this year. "I hope it will be one that benefits both countries, a win-win situation, because immigration can become a real opportunity for the U.S., Mexico and other countries," he said.

But what Mexico sees as a beneficial situation is not necessarily seen that way by the U.S. Hoping to have indirect influence on the vote in Congress and a more direct one on American public opinion, the Mexican government published ads in major U.S. newspapers. In the message, Mexico seeks a solution to the immigration woes of its citizens in the U.S., suggesting that they be included in a guest-worker program, should Congress approve it. At the same time, Mexico commits to doing its part to generate jobs so families don't feel compelled to leave the country.

Fox is very aware that the United States' priority in any immigration reform is security. "It's not only the U.S. who wants border security — Mexico also wants border security," he told me. As part of his country's commitment to the border crisis, he assured me that approximately 200,000 Central Americans who use Mexican territory to reach the United States are being deported to their respective countries each year.

Even though Fox won't admit it, the security problem in Mexico goes far beyond the border. A recent study showed that more than half of the population doesn't feel safe in their own homes. Fox argued that the crime rates in Mexico are not much different from the ones registered in the U.S.

What the president of Mexico will admit is that the power struggle among criminal organizations has increased. "Where we do have heavy security problems is in hot spots like Nuevo Laredo, Tijuana, Cancun and Acapulco. The rest of the country is in peace, there is tranquility and security," said Fox.

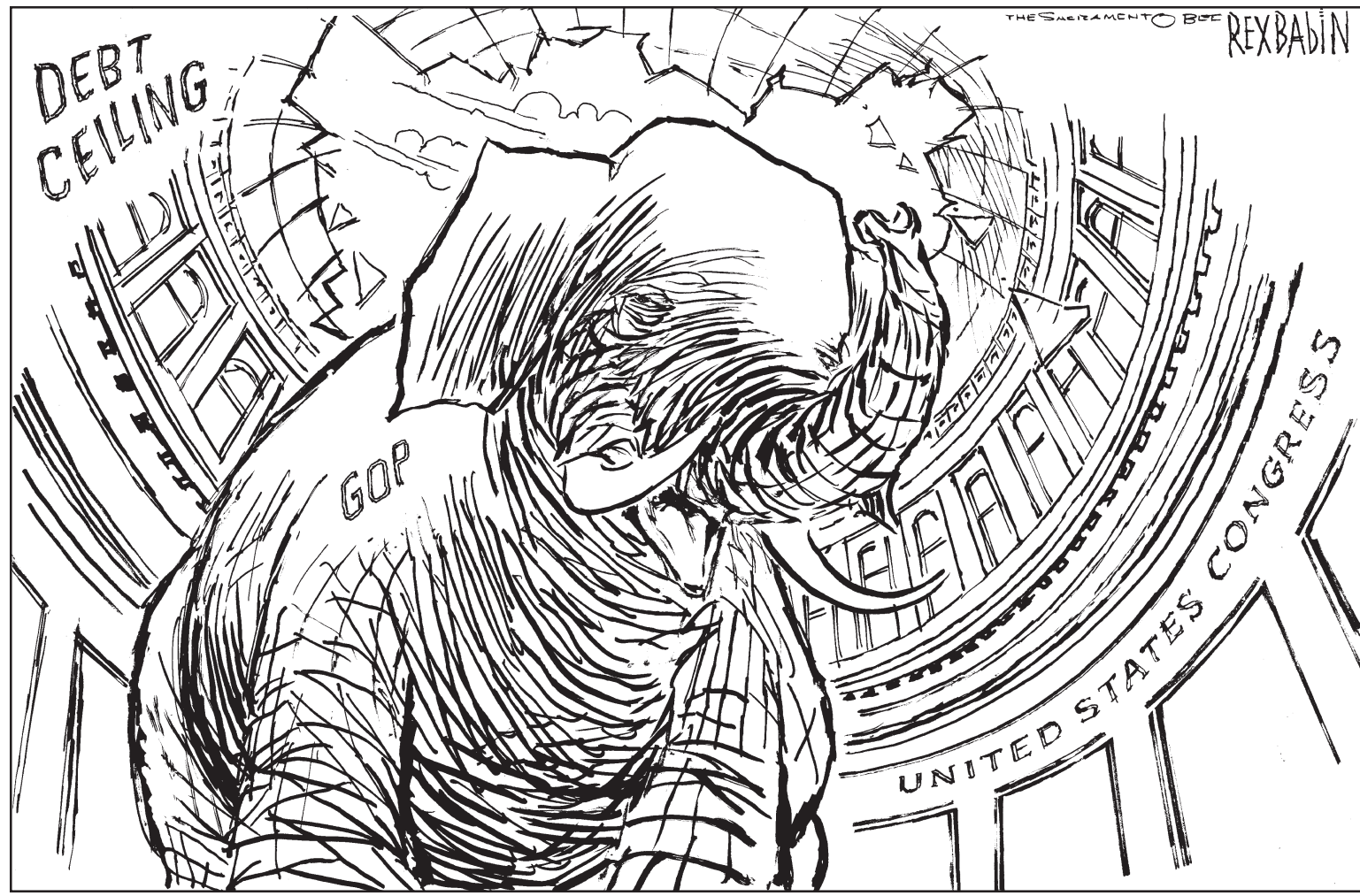
Tourism officials in Cancun were not too happy with the president's comments. They did not like the fact that he included the popular resort in the list of hot spots with heavy security problems at a time when it is trying to attract tourists, after the devastation caused by Hurricane Wilma and a bout of local violence.

Ironically, it's Cancun where President Fox chose to hold the next trilateral summit on March 30 and 31. Fox will meet with President George W. Bush and Canada's new prime minister, Stephen Harper. According to Fox, they will discuss the new "alliance for security and prosperity," an extension of the NAFTA agreement. "We are now looking into things like financial systems, technology and education as well as small businesses, among others," he said.

But it will be his bilateral meeting with Bush that will draw attention. "We will touch upon issues of interest to both countries, particularly immigration." For now, Fox said the only thing he expects is "to get information from the U.S. president on how things are panning out." This very well could be the last meeting between these two heads of state who began their presidency together, as amigos and with common goals, and who are about to finish it as distant neighbors.

Editor's note: Maria Elena Salinas is the author of "I Am My Father's Daughter: Living a Life Without Secrets." She can be reached at website: www.mariaesalinas.com)

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.



The search for fact and fiction

In less than two months, people the world over will have the chance to see the big screen version of one of the best-selling novels of the past decade.

May 19, "The Da Vinci Code" will grace the silver screen, and no doubt will cause even more debate with its latest incarnation.

I haven't yet read the book, but likely will before the movie debuts, but like most people in the free world, I have heard about it, and the hype. (It is the last holdout on my list of recommended books from friends and family who have said "you like that kind of stuff, you should read it.")

The book, by author Dan Brown, is about an academic's search for the truth about the possibility that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene and they had a child together, and that knowledge was covered up through time. And the alleged child became part of a line of French kings.

Interesting premise, and a controversial one. And interestingly enough, the book itself hasn't been the only thing setting people off in positive and negative ways.

The positives are it's spurred many people to read, which, in my opinion, is never bad. It's also piquing interest, and getting people to delve deeper, and find their own truths.

I understand Brown has thrown into his novel real historical things and places like the Knights Templar, Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, the Louvre, Westminster Abbey, and the Catholic Church's Opus Dei.

I have a little insight on one aspect of the book — I took medieval history one semester at Oklahoma State University. The class covered 900-1500s. That spanned everything from the rise of Islam, Christianity's origins as a cult in Europe and how people bridged humanity to the divine, to England's royalty.

In between, it also covered the Angevin and



Tisha Cox

● Off The Beaten Path

Merovingian kings of France. Brown links the kings of the Merovingian line to the bloodline of Jesus. At no time did Professor Bischoff mention in class about a possible link between the two, but that was well before the novel came out.

Since the book was published, I've heard tourism to sites such as Rosslyn Chapel have increased, and with the advent of the movie, even more people could be inspired to go there, and the other historical places featured in the novel.

Again, that isn't a bad thing, but historians fear vandalism, which has already plagued Rosslyn and other sites in the past three years.

Besides the expected upswing in visitors at historical sites, the book's premise recently caused a hitch for Brown.

This month, he was in court in London, fighting accusations of plagiarism. The trial ended last week and a ruling is supposed to come down sometime in April.

As I said, even though I haven't read the book, I do find the debate it's sparked fascinating. People are talking about the book, and with it, their faith.

It's amazing a mainstream thriller novel has managed to bring about an open dialogue, and people are willing to share their opinion.

But therein lies the rub. The book is controversial because of the theory the Holy Grail wasn't a chalice used by Christ at the last sup-

per. There it ventures in to blasphemous territory, with that, and the fictional portrayal of Opus Dei.

That has even caused the Vatican to issue several statements on the real function of Opus Dei, and the church's stance on the novel, which would be against.

And that is definitely saying something, because it means Brown struck a nerve with the Vatican, and Christians in general.

People may find the ideas in his book intriguing, or disturbing, depending on their own beliefs.

Personally, I think it was a good idea, but just that — an idea.

The bottom line is "The Da Vinci Code" is a work of fiction.

However, one novel has caused an entire cottage industry on the subject.

Walk into a book store these days and I guarantee there will be an entire section dedicated to books decoding Da Vinci to debunking the Grail conspiracy.

In Denver a couple of weeks ago, I popped into a Barnes and Noble and they had not only a section dedicated to "The Da Vinci Code" itself, but all of the other books either for or against its ideas.

Despite the hype, it will be interesting in May to see how well the movie is received. No doubt it will cause more debate.

I'll probably read the book before then, and then will decide for myself what I think of Brown's Grail theory.

But to borrow, the truth really is out there for everyone to find.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkansas.com.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tcx@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansas.com

Jasmine Crotinger - Advertising Sales

jasminec@nwkansas.com

John Altman - Advertising Sales

jaltman@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building

japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Your turn

Budget amendment needs support

Helen Poland Gem

Every Alzheimer program supported by the federal government has been slated to be eliminated or cut by the President's budget proposal. Alzheimer research and programs are in crisis. Alzheimer advocates are facing our toughest challenge ever.

Tell your Senators to help restore this critical funding.

This is a critical issue in continuing research for answers to the Alzheimer disease. Our families have a vital interest in finding a cause and cure for this devastating dementia. Is it more important to fund military in excess of the rest of the world combined? Is it necessary to give tax cuts to the top 2 or 3 percent, when the gap

between the rich and the poor gets wider and wider? Cutting deficit spending by eliminating medical research is surely not the answer.

Research, to date, has not come up with solid evidence of what we need to do to avoid getting Alzheimer and they have not found any consistent or reliable treatment for the disease. I still have to tell people the same thing I told them 20 years ago. I presented programs on Alzheimers to groups 20 years ago and there is little difference in research information today. We know a little more how to help families and the victims, themselves, to know how to deal with the problems, but we don't know anymore than we did 20 years ago about curative treatment or prevention.

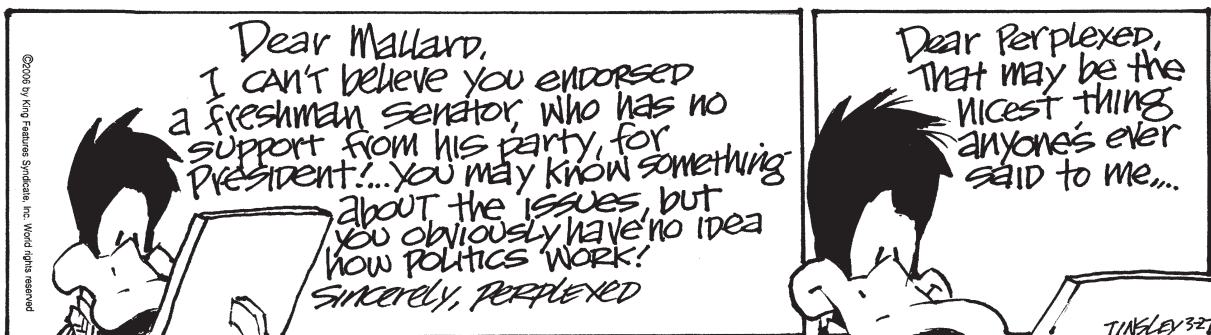
I am not involved with politics and religion. I

let Ken do that. But, I am involved in Long Term Care issues and Alzheimer research funding and support groups. These are not partisan political or religious right or left issues. Politics sets the priorities for our national budget and religion determines our priorities in responding to the frailty of human beings. Therefore, that is where we have to address this issue.

Please, everyone, contact your Senators and encourage them to support the proposed budget amendment that Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) have sponsored. Put this on your list of prayer concerns in your religious groups. Contact me at 785-462-7809 or e-mail to gma@direcway.com if you want more information. The amendment is to restore the funding for research.

Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley



Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

