

codemus told a little of the history of the town, with photographs. The history ended, "Today, the once-prosperous town of Nicodemus is no more."

Because I am interested in ruins, I decided to drive over to the town site. Nicodemus is eighty-two miles from Oakley; surprisingly, Rand McNally still showed it on the map. When I reached the place where I had expected to find just a few foundations by the roadside, I found instead a living town: houses, streets, gardens, a township hall, a baseball field; a Baptist church, and a barbecue place called Ernestine's. Cars, many with out-of-state plates, were parked all over. At Ernestine's, you ordered through a side door and sat at picnic tables outside. I had a sagging paper plate of ribs, cole slaw, and white bread, and a Dr Pepper. At the next table, a large white man wearing overalls and barbecue sauce to the eyebrows told me that Nicodemus was in the middle of its annual Founders' Day Weekend celebration, that he and his wife were from the nearby town of Bogue, that people had come from all over the country, and that tomorrow was the parade. His name was Buzz Mauck. He said he would take me to meet a man named Alvin Bates who had lived in Nicodemus all his life and could tell me anything I wanted to know. I got in the back seat of the Maucks' older-model sedan and rode along bouncy streets and into the driveway of a small, one-story house where Buzz Mauck rolled down his window and yelled, "Alvin!" A short, light-brown man came out and walked up to the car and said, "Hello, Mr. Mauck, how are you doin'?"

"Mr. Mauck! Shoot, I'm Buzz to you," Buzz Mauck said. Then he said, "Alvin, I've got a man here who wants to talk to you about Nicodemus." Turning to me, he said, "Go ahead." I got out and talked while Alvin Bates kept