

REMEMBERING THE DEAD

When you think of Memorial Day Weekend, you probably think of family gatherings, cookouts, homemade ice cream, and so on. The good people of Lake City, Colorado, think of those things too. But they take their holiday festivities a step further than most of us by staging ... A COFFIN RACE!

I am not making this up. On Saturday, May 27, they'll do it again, rigging up caskets on wheels and whizzing down the town's main street. Looks sort of like a soapbox derby, only sponsored by the local morgue. Last year's winner, Mike Doty, created a cadaver crate with lawnmower wheels. After crossing the finish line, the 5-foot-6 1/2, 275-pound champ chalked up his victory to "my great physical shape."

The coffin race is one of a handful of activities remembering Alfred Packer, who in 1874 took five gold prospectors into the mountains near Lake City, where they were trapped by a snowstorm. They ran out of rations, but Alfred found an "alternative"--albeit grisly--food source: his gold-digging companions. Today, posters around town proclaim the event: "Commemorating Lake City's Infamous Man-Eater!" (The posters also pitch the Tubby Carl Memorial Showmanship Award, whatever that is.)

Other activities include a skeleton-assembly contest and the annual Alfred Packer Barbecue Cook-off, with \$700 in prize money. There's also a flea market and plenty of food, including one entrepreneur selling "manburgers"--hamburgers shaped like little men. And then there's the big dance at the town armory on Saturday night. Sounds like a blast. Don't know about you, but I'm just dying to go!