ACE member authors novel about the Great Dakota Turkey Drive

Desperate to find his sister, 13-year-old Joshua Greene is far from home and broke in 1877 when he learns she has gone to the Deadwood gold camp in the Dakota Territory. The only way he can get to rowdy Deadwood, 200 miles away, is to join an 800-turkey trail drive, bossed by a surly, whiskey-guzzling bullwhacker.

So begins "Afoot: A Tale of the Great Dakota Turkey Drive," a young adult novel written by ACE life member George Brandsberg, now retired from a career at Kansas State University.

The coming-of-age story could seem strange coming from someone who served as the news and feature writer for Extension Agricultural Economics and launched electronic publishing with the K-State Research and Extension Web site (http://www.oznet.ksu.edu). But Brandsberg hails from a dairy farm near Belle Fourche, S.D. His grandfather, Jesse Hall, was a pioneer farmer in the northern Black Hills and earned part of his living in the 1870s by hunting big game and selling the meat to miners and others in Deadwood. Brandsberg himself has had a lifelong interest in stories of the Old West and is a professional member of Western Writers of America, as well as ACE and Investigative Reporters and Editors.

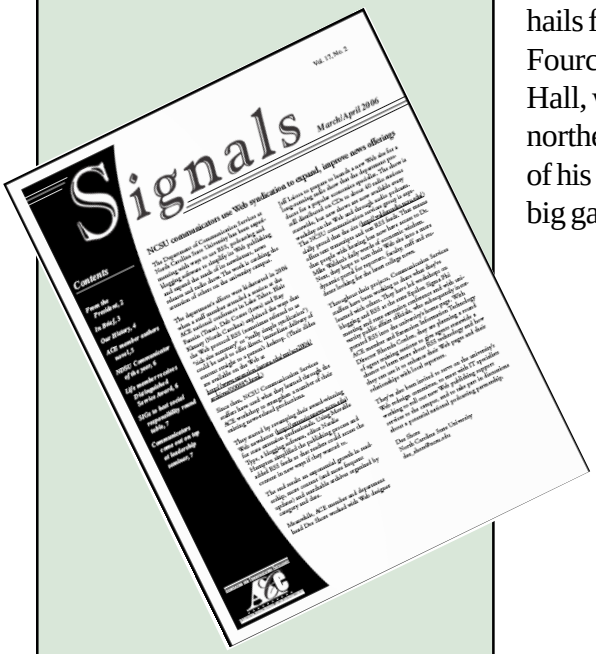
AFOOT is Brandsberg's fifth book and first novel. The story is modeled after a 200- mile, Deadwood-bound trail drive of turkeys that was undertaken in 1878 by teenage brothers named Volin. Josh Greene's fictional trip includes a massacre of convict drovers who had abandoned the turkeys and a highjacking by buffalo hunters hired to protect the drive from "scum of the road."

It features hostile natives, hails of gunfire, a tense river crossing and Josh's constant worry that he will be too late.

The book is available in paperback and hardcover from the publisher at http://www.cedartip.com. It can also be purchased from other online retailers.

You can reach Brandsberg at 785-537-0900 or george@ksu.edu.

—*Signals* (newsletter of the Association for Communication Excellence) , March/April, 2006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