



**Sons of Norway**  
**HERITAGE PROGRAMS**



## MiniPresentation#51

**DALE GUDBRAND**

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The great valley of **Gudbrandsdalen** (GOOD'brahns'dah'lehn), which runs north-south through most of southern Norway, is rich in history and tradition. People have lived there for thousands of years and we hear about the valley in Norse literature. The Sagas also enlighten us as to how Gudbrandsdalen got its name. It is named after a great chieftain, born around the year 965. He was called Dale Gudbrand (DAH'leh 'good'brahn) which means "Gudbrand of the Dales", and he lived in the valley at the time when St. Olav was king of Norway. The Sagas tell about how the king went from township to township, forcing people to become Christian, and this is what happened when he came to Gudbrand's domain:

When Gudbrand learned that King Olav had come to Lom and forced people to accept Christianity, he summoned all Dalesmen to meet with him at his farm called **Hundorp** (HUHN 'dorp). They chose 960 men who were sent as scouts northward in the direction from where the king and his men were coming. Gudbrand's 18-year-old son was the leader of this group. When they met the king's army, there was a short skirmish—then Gudbrand's men retreated and his son was captured. Four days later he was released and sent back home with the following words from the king: "Go back to your father and tell him I shall be there soon."

Gudbrand listened to his son's story and was now even more determined to resist the king. But during the following night he had a dream in which an awe-inspiring man outlined for him the terrible consequences of resisting King Olav. The dream made such an impression on Gudbrand that he was ready to negotiate by the time the king arrived.

The day they met, the king did not give a long speech. He rose and said that the people in the northern valley had accepted Christianity and destroyed their heathen houses of worship, and that they now believed in the true God who created heaven and earth. Gudbrand then rose and replied that he did not know of whom he was speaking, that he could not believe in a god that he could not see. "We have a god", he said, referring to the gold and silver-bedecked wooden statue of **Thor** which the people of the township worshipped. "And he will look terrifying to you and awe-inspiring when you see him. I expect that you will be seized with fear if he comes to the meeting."

The next day a large crowd of **Dalesmen** was assembled and they all sprang to their feet when the idol of Thor was carried to the meeting place. King Olav took one of his men aside—a strong and burly man called Kolbein (Kohl'bayn)—and asked him to strike at the idol with his club as soon as the dalesmen looked away. When the meeting started, Gudbrand challenged King Olav saying, "I see that you are filled with fear now and hardly dare raise your eyes to look at our god. Now give up your idolatry and believe in our god who has all power over you." The king replied that even if they could not see his god, he would soon be with them. As he spoke the sun rose and all the Dalesmen looked up. At that very moment Kolbein struck at the idol. It fell to pieces and out ran mice as big as cats, and adders and snakes.

According to the Sagas, the shattering of their idol quickly convinced the Dalesmen that their god wasn't worth much. They converted to Christianity and both Gudbrand and his son were baptized. Gudbrand and King Olav parted in peace and Gudbrand built a church. There are still descendants of Dale Gudbrand living in Gudbrandsdalen, and he probably has descendants in North-America as well.