



New state senators
Bruce Tutvedt, left, and
Taylor Brown

MSU ag grads and long-time friends now serve in the Montana Senate

BY MELYNDA HARRISON

Bruce Tutvedt, '78 AgBus, and Taylor Brown, '79 AgSci, are both members of the 2009 Montana Senate, but it's not the first time they've met. Though from different corners of the state, the two men have been long-time friends and colleagues.

Tutvedt and Brown met as high school students at a state FFA convention on MSU's campus. They met again at MSU during high school week, and in 1974 both started at MSU as agriculture majors. It was as members of the ag fraternity Alpha Gamma Rho that they cemented their friendship.

"Those bonds formed in the Greek System are deeper than any other bonds you form in college," said Brown.

It was at MSU that the two men were first involved in politics—Tutvedt as a member of the ASMSU student senate, and Brown as its president.

Tutvedt and Brown are both from multigenerational ranch families. Tutvedt grew up in western Montana near Kalispell, while Brown was raised in eastern Montana near Sand Springs.

Today, Tutvedt and his father, **Harold Tutvedt**, '51 AgEcon, run the family farm between Whitefish and Kalispell. They operate a feedlot and a cow-calf operation and grow peppermint, wheat, barley and alfalfa.

Brown may have the most recognized voice in western agriculture. He joined the

"I tell young people that if you are going to stay in the state, and plan to stay in agriculture, then you can benefit tremendously from attending MSU and building deep relationships with other leaders who will be involved in Montana's number one industry."

—Sen. Taylor Brown

Northern Broadcasting System as an on-air farm broadcaster in 1979. As the owner of the company since 1985, he now heads up a team that produces more than three dozen information programs every market day for over 70 affiliated radio stations in four states and two daily ag television programs.

"We come by it (agriculture careers) naturally," said Brown. "Both our families are leaders in the industry, and we are the next generation. Now our kids are following in our footsteps."

Despite different careers on opposite ends of the state, the men and their families have stayed close, and even have Bobcat season tickets near each other.

"Taylor is a very solid, salt of the earth person," Tutvedt said. "If you need him to be there for you he will, even if that means driving across the state."

MSU is still an important part of their lives. Tutvedt and Brown are involved in raising money for the College of Agriculture's

new Animal Bioscience building, where one room will be named for their fraternity, AGR. They both have children who are attending or graduated from MSU and both of Brown's sons are AGR brothers.

"The biggest thing we got out of MSU is the relationship with other ag leaders," said Brown. "The classes are valuable, but the relationships with other successful Montana business and ag leaders are crucial. I tell young people that if you are going to stay in the state, and plan to stay in agriculture, then you can benefit tremendously from attending MSU and building deep relationships with other leaders who will be involved in Montana's number one industry."

In 2008 Tutvedt and Brown (along with 13 other MSU graduates) were elected to the Montana Senate from districts 3 and 22, respectively. While their constituents' needs are different (Tutvedt's district is more urban, Brown's rural), they both hold a spot on the taxation committee and will discuss issues related to agriculture.

"As an ag producer in a growingly urban area like the Flathead, Bruce brings an important facet to the legislature," said Brown. "His personal experience in issues like wolf depredation, in zoning and planning issues, and in growing a successful family business along the urban-rural interface is invaluable here." 🐾