

THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

Riding Bonds Physician Brothers

Dr. Chris Frost and Dr. Marc Frost acquired their love for off-road motorcycle riding as youngsters growing up in St. Donatus, Iowa, a small town with rolling hills near Dubuque.

Their father was a motor sports enthusiast who thought off-road riding would be a good hobby for his boys, so he bought them motorcycles to tool around with. But he was a stickler for riding safety.

"When we were in grade school our dad told us that if he ever caught us riding a motorcycle either in a crazy way or not wearing a helmet, the motorcycle would be sold and gone," recalled Chris, a dermatologist who practices in Somerset, Ky. "We believed him, and we never rode without one."

Chris and Marc put riding on hold during college and medical school but, since 2002, they have been taking occasional weekend outings on off-road designated trails in the 770,000-acre Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky.

The trails in the park cover mostly rugged terrain with steep ridges and sandstone cliffs.

The brothers like riding in the area because they prefer narrow, technically challenging trails littered with water pools, rocks, steep hills, tree roots, and mud holes.

Once every 3 months, Marc and his two teenage children drive 4 hours from their home in Indianapolis to Chris's home in Somerset.

The next day, the crew drives to the forest for a 20- to 30-mile ride that can last up to 6 hours on the mountainous trails—but not before a careful inspection of each bike to make sure the bike chain is tight, the fluid levels are capped off, and the tires are properly inflated.

"If something goes wrong, you're a long way from being able to easily remedy it," said Marc, the more mechanically inclined of the two brothers, who has a private dermatology practice in Indianapolis.

"We don't go unless we're sure that the bikes are capable. If a bike's not rideable that day, we stay home," he said.

The off-road rides "are no piece of cake," Marc added. He said he would describe a day's ride as the physical equivalent

of running a half-marathon.

"In fact, I train for our quarterly rides by running in trail marathons and ultra marathons. So 3-4 days of riding leaves us oldsters—I'm 49—a little on the stiff and sore side."

Riding motorcycles off road "gives me a reason to try and stay in shape," he said.

"For years, I was the sort who was not physically active, and did not really eat well. Now I exercise on a regular basis. I carefully watch what I eat and my weight. My general condition is far better than it was when I was 40."

There have been mishaps on the trips, like the time a 1996 motorcycle Chris was riding "got away from him" and careened off a cliff.

Because he's an experienced rider, he knew not to stay on the bike, "but my brother said they watched as the motorcycle went flying off the side of the cliff and I wasn't on it," Chris said.

"They were wondering where I was. When it went off the cliff, it got stuck on a tree and we were able to haul it back," he said.

Like their dad, the Frost brothers preach safe riding at all times. That means wearing full gear, including a helmet, goggles, gloves, chest protectors, elbow protectors, knee protectors, and good boots.

Other essentials they pack include wireless headsets, tools, maps, a compass, water, and snacks.

The Frosts commonly encounter other riders who aren't wearing helmets or who are drinking from open containers of alcohol.



Dr. Chris Frost and Dr. Marc Frost always wear safety gear when riding, noting an occasion when Chris careened off a cliff.

"I preach to my kids to ride responsibly; ride within your limits," Marc said.

They had just finished up a day of riding before they were interviewed. "Today, there were six of us riding together, but each of us had a partner we'd stick with." This is important so that if something were to happen, you're not out there by yourself. "We never ride alone," Marc said.

Chris, who is 54 years old, added that he and Marc are smart riders because they are dermatologists who don't like to take chances in their clinical practice.

"We're very methodical about what we do in our practice," he said. "We're also very methodical about riding, and we don't take chances."

Both brothers remarked about the positive impact of the quarterly motorcycle rides on family life.

For Marc, one of the best parts "is getting to spend 4 hours with both of my kids driving down here and 4 hours driving back," he said.

"You'd be amazed at how much family stuff we get to talk about. Anytime teenagers can't wait to do something with their dad or uncle, that's a pretty good gig," he added.

He also looks forward to talking about dermatology cases with Chris. "As a solo practitioner, I don't normally have that as an outlet," he said.

Chris described the camaraderie that evolves from the rides as "one of the most valuable things in the world: to get to know your relatives better and to enjoy the limited time you have with them. We're all getting older and need to spend more time with each other."

By Doug Brunk, San Diego Bureau

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Marc, shown on a recent ride, prefers mud-filled, narrow, challenging trails.

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