

TIME TO UP-SIZE!!

Story & Photos: Chris Bult

There's quite a bit on we 'older' riders downsizing to compensate for our deteriorating faculties. Couldn't agree more; then I decided to go in exactly the opposite direction! The old Harley turns 30 this year and with nearly 160,000 km on the clock, was



starting to become unreliable and simply struggled to keep up with some of my mates on their quicker bikes. (*Still looks great for a 30-year old bike! Elwyn*). So I mostly rode with them on the mighty and very capable Yamaha MT-01; only to discover I was now starting to cramp up badly, both in the right thigh, and hands becoming claws. No doubt due to the semi-crouched position and bent

legs restricting blood-flow, especially on hot days.

So one day, shopping around with a mate who was also looking for a new bike, I came across a **Honda F6B** - basically the slimmed down Goldwing. It loses reverse, along with a few other luxuries, but still weighs a whopping 385 kg!

Never in a million years did I envisage myself on something like this, but against my better judgment, went back to the dealer next day and took it for a test ride. Hugely impressed! Very low centre of gravity, with the flat 6 1800cc motor down low and petrol tank right above it too, so easier to paddle around than the Harley. Missed out on that one, but found a low mileage 2013 model in Bathurst, bought it and rode it home to Port Stephens. So both my MTs gone and the old Harley too.

I was sorry to see the old Harley go, but it's gone to a good home and will be well looked after. And the MTs are fast becoming something of a cult classic as people begin to realise they're quite unique. The Brits have already recognised this, and good ones sell in pounds for what we see in dollars here.

I must admit I was sorely tempted to downsize, and liked the look of the Triumph Speed Twin, but always liked big bikes and figured, alright, at 74 not as strong as I used to be, but my balance is still sharp and I just need to think ahead with parking and tight turns. There's also that philosophy about staying in the two storey house and using the stairs – keeps the muscles in shape for as long as possible, in other words: 'use it or lose it'.



The F6B is a mighty impressive bike: extremely smooth and quiet, with huge power of course, and it took a little practice to master slow riding, as the power kicks in immediately, unlike big twins that tend to deliver their grunt more gently. The trick is to slow ride in second or even third gear thereby reducing any jerkiness that can bring you quickly undone in tight 'U' turns.

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So far, so good. Done a couple of long trips, and a few short ones, without any problems. Having a riding buddy in the same street with a full size Goldwing has helped, especially regarding his advice with slow riding techniques.

The F6B is very impressive. I've never ridden a bike so smooth and linear in its power delivery. Just like a car in many respects and the shaft drive adds to this feeling. So no more groveling around on the garage floor fettling the chain and sprockets!

I might still have to downsize one day, I can't see me riding it in ten years time. Might be time by then for a Can-Am Spyder. But in the meantime I'm enjoying this big beastie immensely and most importantly – it's damned comfortable; and no more cramps.