



**PIPER MEMORIAL AIRPORT
353 PROCTOR STREET
LOCK HAVEN PA 17745**

For Immediate Release:

Railroader Takes to the Skies

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Lock Haven, PA, 8 April 2018 – Following a four decade hiatus since his first attempt to become a pilot, Mark Smart of Imler PA finally demonstrated successful solo flight at the Piper Memorial Airport in an Evektor SportStar, the primary trainer aircraft at AvSport of Lock Haven. As he approached retirement, Smart, 61, a railroad maintenance manager originally from Illinois, decided it was time to check off "become a pilot" from his bucket list.

Smart began flying at Lock Haven last October with Prof. H. Paul Shuch, founder and Chief Flight Instructor of AvSport. Because it had been nearly forty years since his last lesson, he had to restart his training almost from scratch. Winter weather delayed his progress, but he took advantage of that opportunity to study for, and ace, his FAA Sport Pilot knowledge test.

The arrival of Spring saw Smart redoubling his efforts. His recent solo excursion, which occurred in blustery winds that tested (but did not exceed) his comfort zone, consisted of five circuits of the local traffic pattern, and included three full-stop landings (following each of which, his grin broadened).

Although he has thus far trained in AvSport's trainer, Mark has purchased his own experimental airplane, a Zenith 601XLB, in which he hopes to complete his flight training. A skilled mechanic, he decided on an experimental aircraft chiefly because of rules allowing him to perform his own maintenance and modifications on it.

The Sport Pilot license, in which AvSport specializes, is the newest portal of entry into the world of aviation, allowing prospective pilots to become licensed in half the time, and at half the cost, of the traditional Private Pilot license. Sport Pilots fly solely for pleasure, in fair weather, during daylight hours, in simple, low-performance Light Sport aircraft. Piper Memorial Airport is the ancestral home to the legendary Piper Cub, arguably the world's first sport plane. Modern Light Sport aircraft allow pilots to recapture the bygone fly-for-fun Cub era, with increased reliability and improved safety. Anyone interested in learning more about sport flying is invited to browse the school's extensive website at <http://AvSport.org>, where a wealth of free training materials awaits.

DOWNLOADABLE PHOTO: <http://www.avsport.org/photos/solo/mark.jpg>

CAPTION: Cheryl Smart does the honors in a ceremony that dates back to aviation's Golden Age, by cutting off her husband Mark's shirt tail following his first successful solo flight. That piece of fabric was signed by his flight instructor, and now joins the shirt tails of 17 other successful solo pilots trained at AvSport of Lock Haven.