



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

For Immediate Release:

Aspiring Pilot Flies Solo – Finally!

**For more information, contact Prof. H. Paul Shuch, Chief Flight Instructor
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Lock Haven, PA, 4 December 2014 – The third time was the charm for student pilot Bill Gowen, who today completed his first solo flight at AvSport of Lock Haven, the sport aviation school on the Piper Memorial Airport. Twice before, he had nearly achieved this goal before circumstances intervened.

Gowen, a patent attorney employed in technology transfer at Penn State, had begun his flight instruction in New Jersey nearly two years ago, while employed at Princeton University. Moving to State College interrupted his studies, which he resumed early in 2014 at the University Park airport. Unfortunately, his new flight instructor soon found employment elsewhere, causing a second interruption to his flight training, just before Gowen was able to achieve his first solo flight.

Undeterred, Gowen in August commenced a weekly commute to Lock Haven, to resume flight instruction. Since he was transitioning to a different aircraft, with a different instructor, at a different flight school, it became necessary for him to repeat some of his previous lessons. Nevertheless, he demonstrated competency to Prof. H. Paul Shuch, AvSport's chief flight instructor, achieving his longtime goal of flying three times around the local traffic pattern as an aircraft's sole occupant.

Upon completion of the solo flight, Dr. Shuch cut the tail off of Bill Gowen's t-shirt, and autographed it to mark the occasion. This ritual dates back to the Golden Age of aviation, when barnstormers frequently had to patch rips in their fabric-covered aircraft with pieces of their own garments. Bill's shirttail now graces the wall of the AvSport office, proudly joining a dozen other shirts representing the students who have achieved this same milestone since the flight school was established in January of 2010.

Over the winter months, Gowen will be preparing to sit for his required FAA written examination, before resuming his flying lessons. During the post-solo training to follow, he will be receiving additional instruction, allowing him to advance beyond what Shuch calls an "airplane driver," to become a safe and competent Pilot in Command.

Piper Memorial Airport is the ancestral home to the legendary Piper Cub, arguably the world's first sport plane. Modern Light Sport aircraft, such as the one used as a primary trainer at AvSport, allow pilots to recapture the bygone fly-for-fun Cub era, with increased reliability and improved safety.

DOWNLOADABLE PHOTO: http://www.avsport.org/photos/solo/Bill_shirt.jpg

CAPTION: AvSport Chief Flight Instructor H. Paul Shuch (left) trims Bill Gowen's shirt-tail after a successful solo flight. This tradition, dating to the Golden Age of aviation, recalls a time when student pilots frequently had to patch the rips in their fabric aircraft with pieces of their own garments.

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