



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

For Immediate Release:

Future Air Force Officer Conquers The Sky

**For more information, contact Prof. H. Paul Shuch, Chief Flight Instructor
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Lock Haven, PA, 8 December 2023 – Curtis Rabatin, an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadet at Penn State University, has achieved the significant milestone of flying an aircraft as its sole occupant. Rabatin, 20, of Lancaster PA, is a Computer Engineering student seeking to become an Air Force pilot. He expects to be commissioned upon graduation. To get a leg up on his military career, he started flight training in October at AvSport LLC, the sport flying school on the Piper Memorial Airport in Lock Haven, achieving his first solo flight just eight weeks later, after less than a dozen hours of rigorous and highly structured flight instruction.

“Curtis is highly motivated,” says AvSport founder and Chief Flight Instructor Dr. H. Paul Shuch, a retired Physics professor, and himself an Air Force veteran. “His engineering background has helped him to master what I call ‘airplane driving’ rather quickly. He will spend his winter break preparing to sit for the FAA Sport Pilot written exam. Then, during the Spring academic term, he begins advanced pilot training. I expect him to move rather quickly from ‘airplane driver’ to licensed pilot.”

“I was more nervous about this solo flight than I have been about anything my entire life,” reports Rabatin, “but my first circuit around the traffic pattern just flew by. After that, the rest of the flight just felt routine to me.” The significant milestone of his first solo flight culminated in the ceremonial trimming of the shirt tails. This ritual dates back to the early days of aviation, when aspiring pilots often had to patch up their fabric covered aircraft with pieces of their own garments.

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. Sport flying is also a perfect stepping stone to higher ratings, as all the skills learned transfer to larger aircraft. 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://avsport.org/photos/solo/curtis.jpg>

CAPTION: Prof. H. Paul Shuch congratulates Air Force ROTC cadet Curtis Rabatin on a successful first solo flight, at AvSport LLC, the flight school on the Piper Memorial Airport, Lock Haven PA.

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