



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

For Immediate Release:

Penn State Prof. Flies the ‘Coupe

**For more information, contact Prof. H. Paul Shuch, Chief Flight Instructor
Office (570) 748-3725, Cell (570) 419-1229, email fly@AvSport.org**

Lock Haven, PA, 26 May 2012 – Like most students at AvSport of Lock Haven, Art Hattel had always dreamed of becoming a pilot. It just took Hattel, a Penn State veterinary science faculty member, longer than most to achieve his dream.

Two years ago, Hattel began pursuing a Sport Pilot license with Prof. H. Paul Shuch, founder and chief flight instructor of the new flying school on the Piper Memorial Airport. After just ten lessons, he began researching the antique Ercoupe light plane on the internet, deciding that the ‘Coupe was the perfect plane for him. He searched online for a flight instructor knowledgeable about the quirky 1940s classic, with its unconventional flight controls. Much to his surprise, Hattel discovered a suitable local instructor listed as a member of, and endorsed by, the Ercoupe Owner’s Club: Prof. Shuch himself.

In October of 2010, Hattel and Shuch traveled to Florida to check out a 1946 ‘Coupe listed for sale online. After completing a pre-purchase inspection, and a thorough test flight conducted by Shuch, Hattel purchased the Ercoupe on the spot, arranged for it to be delivered to Lock Haven, and resumed lessons, this time in a plane of his own.

Hattel’s Ercoupe instruction was interrupted after just two lessons, when he decided to treat his antique prize to a five-month-long total airframe restoration. Next, following only three flight lessons in April 2011, it became evident that the airplane would require a complete engine overhaul. That process ended up taking an agonizing eleven months. “Expensive and frustrating as this process has been,” states Shuch, “it’s par for the course with a 66 year old airplane. After all, I’m the same age as Art’s Ercoupe, and I’ve been through some major maintenance myself.”

On the afternoon of the Spring equinox, Hattel finally got to resume instruction in his now-better-than-new 1946 Ercoupe. “I was astounded at how competently Art handled his plane, after a hiatus of nearly a full year,” said Shuch. “It’s obvious that he’s been flying the ‘Coupe in his head every day that it’s been down for maintenance.”

Within just two weeks, however, Art’s plane was back in the maintenance shop – a frustrating situation for all concerned. While awaiting repairs, Hattel took a vacation to San Manuel, Arizona, where he received additional flight training at PC Aircraft in an Ercoupe identical to his own. Flight instructor Parish Traweek deemed him ready, and allowed Art to complete his first solo flight, a significant rite of passage for aspiring aviators. “Art has proven himself a competent airplane driver,” stated Shuch. “Now he begins his advanced training, during which I will endeavor to help him become a fully qualified pilot.”

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. 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.

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

CAPTION: Flight instructor Parrish Traweek (right) congratulates Art Hattel on his first solo flight, on 18 May 2012 in San Manuel, Arizona, in a 1946 Ercoupe identical to his own plane.

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