

90-DAY WONDER



PHOTO PROVIDED

Flight instructor Prof. H. Paul Shuch cuts the tail off Steve Falotico's shirt, in an ancient ceremony marking the local police chief's first solo flight at AvSport of Lock Haven on the Piper Memorial Airport.

Woodward police chief takes first solo flight

LOCK HAVEN — Exactly 90 days after his first flight lesson, Steve Falotico flew an airplane as its sole occupant, at the historic Piper Memorial Airport, marking a significant milestone on the road to becoming a licensed pilot.

Falotico, 55, is a retired Lock Haven police corporal who now serves as police chief of Woodward Township. He accomplished his first solo flight on Sunday at AvSport of Lock Haven, the sport aviation flight school at the local airport.

Falotico has been taking instruction once or twice a week from H. Paul Shuch, founder and chief flight instructor of the flight school.

"Steve's professionalism was evident from the start," says Shuch, a retired professor of physics and engineering. "His law enforcement background provided him with both moti-

vation and the discipline necessary to readily master complex flying skills."

Upon completion of the solo flight, Dr. Shuch cut the tail off of Falotico'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.

Steve's shirttail is now displayed on 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 next two weeks, Falotico 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, allow-

ing him to advance beyond what Shuch calls an "airplane driver," to become a safe and competent Pilot in Command.

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.

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.