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Thursday, September 1, 2005

Moriarty-Based Soaring Club Breezing to Victory

By **Beth Hahn**

Mountain View Telegraph

The Albuquerque Soaring Club, based at the Moriarty Municipal Airport, is one of the most active and well-traveled glider clubs in the world.

ASC members are set to win a second straight Soaring Society of America Online Contest in mid-October.

Club member Mark Mocho said Moriarty's pristine soaring conditions allow local pilots to fly longer and farther than in most other areas of the world.

"We've got very, very good weather out here," he said Monday afternoon.

The SSA Online Contest begins each Oct. 15. Soaring club members log their distances at the end of each day and groups are scored based on distance flown and time spent in the air.

The Albuquerque Soaring Club is in first place, more than 20,000 points ahead of the second-place Seattle Glider Council.

According to the SSA contest site, ASC's 33 pilots combined have flown more than 150,000 kilometers during 445 flights, compared to Seattle's 133,000 kilometers. A kilometer is equal to about five-eighths of a mile.

Mocho said ASC began participating in the online contest last year, after a member found the challenge on the Internet.

"We got started kind of late, so we didn't think we had much of a chance (to win)," he said.

Some clubs send their pilots to other countries or even other

continents to fly when weather at home is not conducive to soaring, said Mocho, but in Moriarty, gliders can fly almost year-round.

Moriarty's world-famous soaring-friendly conditions allowed local pilots to fly often enough that the club ended up winning first place.

Last year, the local pilots edged out a California gliding club by about 30,000 kilometers and almost 30,000 points.

"We were kind of surprised," said Mocho.

The top ranking drew the attention of glider aficionados all over the world, who began to notice Moriarty.

"We've had a lot of foreign pilots come out here (to fly)," said Mocho. "In the past, we've known how good the conditions are, but now everyone is getting to know how good the conditions are in Moriarty."

Mocho flies two or three times a week and on every weekend—weather permitting. He said the online statistics are a motivation for the club to keep flying.

"People all over the world can see who has the most flights or the longest flights," he said. "There are thousands of pilots across the world that are participating in this."

For more information, visit the Albuquerque Soaring Club's Web site at www.abqsoaring.org.

Another soaring landmark in Moriarty, the U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum, is under construction.

Museum vice president Steve Hill said Monday that museum officials are working on plumbing and wiring in the building, located at the east end of Old Route 66, near Lisa's Truck Stop.

Once the plumbing and wiring are complete, Hill said, the museum will need a permit before it can open to the public.

All of the work in the museum is being done by volunteers.

The U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum will house dozens of donated glider planes, hang gliders and scale models as well as literature and photographs about sailplanes.

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