

Asarco Mine

March 27, 2015, President Mendoza, Vice-President Schumann, Business Agents Arnold Coronado, Alex Montes, Josh Graves, Carlos Toledo, K.T. Thomas, Special Project Coordinator Dawn Schumann, and UPS Steward Kenny Locklin toured the Asarco Facility in Sahuarita, AZ. Asarco Steward Kevin Hampton led us on a three-hour tour from the top of the mine to the bottom.

If you have never been on a mine tour, there are a few things that I want to share with you. The first thing that eased my mind was we were not driving down and around the “benches” as they are called. I thought that was the road. Imagine ALL our relief when we found out that was not the way down.



Each bench is 40 feet tall, and are built that way so the dirt will stay in it's proper place and not create a landslide.

The next bit of information that was given quickly was you drive on the left side of the road at ALL times. I really didn't understand that until I saw one of the biggest dump trucks coming up the road. I asked why we were driving on the left side, and when I saw the truck I understood. Imagine driving a dump truck that big. Kevin told me to go home, go upstairs, look out a window and try and drive your house. There is only so much you can see while driving like that. Driving on the left side of the road provides the drivers more visibility to see everything. The maximum speed limit is 5 miles per hour. When you see a truck coming up the hill you understand why it is that slow and you appreciate it.

Then there was this little zippy machine. It is called a Wiggle Tail Rubber Tire Operator. A wiggle tail is the most important job inside a mine. A wiggle tail makes sure that the roads stay clean. For the whole shift, a wiggle tail cleans the roads to make sure that tires do not get ruined. One tire on a “small” dump truck is \$40,000.00 US dollars. You appreciate your tires a lot more when you think that one of their tires are 40k. They swoop up fallen rock, and make sure that the roads are smooth.

Afterwards, the water trucks come and spray down the roads. A small water truck holds 20,000 gallons of water. They primarily do it on the upside of the road. They do it sporadically on the downside of the road. They can't do it on the downside often due to the trucks losing traction.

When you are in the open pit, you look up and realize how amazingly huge a mine is. When we got out of bus at the bottom, we were able to stand next to one machine. It was not performing that day, which was nice for us. This is Business Agent Alex Montes standing next to this beast of a machine.



We stopped to take a picture in the front, and even together, felt so very tiny.



As we went through the mine, we stopped at the South Mill and we were able to go inside. Here is where they take the crushed rock, roll it in a steel drum with steel balls and tumble it thoroughly, where it is broken down to smaller pieces and made into a powder. It is then mixed with pine oil and other chemicals in a large vat where the copper separates and floats up and other sediment falls to the bottom of the vat. When the powder is ready it travels to a smelter in Hayden, Arizona, and then travels to Amarillo, Texas to be refined into copper, ore, zinc, gold, platinum, etc.

We then went to the North Mill, which was the first mill built on site. The South Mill is very clean and very modern. The North Mill looks like something a Mine Mill would look like (in my

mind). Very loud, very dusty and it feels like the old days. It was there that I finally felt I was in a mine. It was something that I can't explain, however it was a very surreal feeling.

MSHA, which is Mine Safety & Health Administration, has been protecting miner's safety and health since 1978. I would be remiss if I didn't mention MSHA. Safety is taught with quickness and on a regular basis. MSHA is developing new safety techniques for mines everyday. Visiting their website (www.msha.gov), I have a deeper appreciation for the safety of Mines and what MSHA does on a daily basis to ensure all the mines are within safe zones.

Leaving the pit area, we went to the top of the hill to the observatory area. Looking down, you realize how BIG this mine is. There was a respectable silence unifying us all as Teamsters. UPS, Miners, Warehouse, and Grocery Teamsters together looking over this mine. It was inspiring.

Inside the mine, there are many Unions working together. Brothers and Sisters working in Solidarity and in Unity. This job operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are virtually no holidays off; there are no weather breaks. This is what your brothers and sisters do, and it is their passion.

Thank you Steward Kevin Hampton for allowing us to come in your world.

Until the next adventure,

Dawn Schumann
Special Projects Coordinator



