

## Travelling 1,600 feet below ground

**By Olivia Kennah**

We just kept dropping and dropping and dropping until we were 1,600 feet into the Earth.

Tuesday, fellow reporter Lillian Palmer and I went into the TATA Chemicals Green River Facility.

In reality, the ride in the shaft lasted about two and a half minutes, but it felt much longer. I could feel the change of pressure in my head and my ears were popping. Adrenaline was running through my body. I was a little nervous, but mainly I was excited for what I was about to experience. We rode down with some miners and it was just another day for them. On the other hand, Lillian and I were experiencing this for the first time. It is kind of a surreal feeling going that far into the ground surrounded by nothing but rock.

I don't know what I was expecting to see down there. I didn't necessarily think it would be like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs - you know, with the old carts, picks and shovels - but it was surprising to see all of the massive technical equipment they use.

Our tour guide, Senior Mining Engineer Steve Finley, was supplying us with a constant flow of information. I was trying my best to scribble it all down, but mining is much more technical than I initially thought. There were a lot of details to take in.

At one point in the tour, we walked along a conveyer belt where they move the trona through part of the mine. There were three men mining the trona and the dust was insane. My nose was burning and my face and hair were covered in it. Since it's trona, the dust isn't harmful, but it was uncomfortable. As we were watching these miners work I couldn't help but think how I would never want to do this job. I don't think I could ever be comfortable under that much rock, with that much dust and in that dark of space for 12 hours a day. I've always respected the mining community and I always knew their job was tough, but the mine tour deepened that respect.

It was interesting to learn that trona wasn't even discovered until 1938 at Westvaco, near Little America. Before then it was all made synthetically. The Green River area has the biggest trona deposit in the world. Plus, the mines in the area supply about 90 percent of the country's trona. I've lived in Green River my entire life, and I never knew much about trona until this week. I'm grateful for this opportunity to learn about such an important part of the community.

As we were leaving TATA, Lillian and I thought about how we were just under where we were driving. It's a crazy thought.