



Overdue Marine

May 26, 1986

Wonderland of Rocks - Joshua Tree

1986-019

By Rob Gardner

At about 2:30 pm on Monday May 26, 1986 the RMRU was called out by the National Park Service (NPS) at Joshua Tree National Monument (JTNM). A search was in progress for overdue hiker Sgt. Juan Badillo of 29 Palms Marine Base.

Juan and his friend, Lonnie Rasch, had entered JTNM via Forty-nine Palms Can-yon, at the north side of JTNM, at about 7:00 am on Sunday for a day hike. They had planned to hike through the desolate Wonderland of Rocks and exit at Park Route 12. They had an alternate plan of heading due south.

At about 6:00 pm Sunday the two hikers became separated but had voice contact. Reportedly, voice contact was lost at 1:30 am Monday.

Lonnie found his way out of Wonderland of Rocks at about 7:00 am and re-reported the circumstances to NPS rangers. Lonnie reported that Juan was in good physical condition and that although he was not familiar with the desert he had the experience of overnight military operations and jungle training. Lonnie advised that in preparation for the near 100°F temperatures Juan was carrying six quarts of water, two quarts of Gatorade, and a bag of oranges. Interestingly, Juan reportedly was not carrying a compass, knife, matches, flashlight or map.

At about 12:00 noon a missing person report was filed at JTNM Headquarters and a search was started. Initially, the JTNM Volunteer Search and Rescue Team, JOSAR, was called out and a Landells Aviation helicopter was contracted. At about 2:30 pm the RMRU and El Toro Marine Base SAR helicopter were called out.

At about 4:30 pm Don Landells found Juan Badillo by air search. Juan was located in Wonderland of Rocks about one mile northeast of Keys Ranch. He was signaling for help. The El Toro SAR helo team flew Juan to the Base Hospital at nearby 29 Palms Marine Base, where Juan was found to be in okay condition except for dehydration. The El Toro team was Capt. McDonald, USMC (Pilot), Sgt. Meuli, USMC (Crew Chief), and HM2 Mike Anjola, USN (In-Flight Medical Technician).

search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.