

The Prison Letters of Timothy McVeigh

# Esquire

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MAN AT HIS BEST

Staying in  
Touch with  
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Greatest  
WWII Story  
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The Last 6  
Scripts in  
Hollywood  
That Guy  
from *The  
West  
Wing*

## Swimming off the Map

### THE BLUE HOLES OF THE DESERT SOUTHWEST

Somewhere in America, right this very moment, Pancho Doll is trudging up some lonely embankment in the middle of God knows where, pausing to consult a topographic map that won't sit still in the wind. His legs are scraped and tired from one too many marches down trails without names, and his stomach rumbles from too many Power Bars and not enough meat. The sun is hot and sinking fast, but until Doll finds that emerald spring-fed tub, that pool that sparkles like a bed of diamonds, where he can strip down to his

trunks and dive in, he is still on the clock. When he was laid off by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1995, where he worked as a staff writer, Doll got in his truck and set out to do a little hiking, maybe use the time to reflect on his career. But unemployment can lead to enlightenment. The only reflection he encountered was from the swimming holes he found off the trailheads, those well-guarded secrets of locals tucked away in the burnt-red canyons of Arizona and Utah and in the foothills of California. And suddenly Doll had his answer. He sold everything, and, still being the reporter, he followed his topo maps to where he

### SUMMER IN THE STATES

thought there was water, grilled every gas-station clerk from L. A. to Moab, went broke and hungry, was robbed twice, and went months without human companionship. But the work paid off. His *Day Trips with a Splash* guidebooks (*Running Water*, \$18) to swimming holes in California and the desert Southwest have made him a cult figure. The books include photos, detailed commentary, and GPS readings for more than four hundred different holes, from the granite pools of Oregon Creek in the High Sierras to the steep falls of Arizona's Milagrosa Canyon. [www.running-water.com](http://www.running-water.com).

—B. M.