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Hero's welcome, hot dogs for rescued Chile miner

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COPIAPO, Chile (Reuters) - With confetti in his hair and a throng of neighbours cheering his arrival, rescued Chilean miner Edison Pena made his way on Thursday up the front steps of a home he thought he would never see again.

"I didn't think I'd make it back, so this reception really blows my mind," said Pena, one of Chile's 33 rescued miners, pressing through the crowd into his relatives' embrace.

His family prepared him a homecoming meal his fast food-loving musical idol, Elvis Presley, would have appreciated -- hot dogs.

Pena was among the first of three miners cleared by doctors to return home, no worse for wear after 69 days trapped half a mile underground with 32 companions.

The men are in surprisingly good health after the Wednesday rescue and most are expected to leave the hospital on Friday. But triathlete Pena has stood out physically since the early days of confinement, when he ran 6 miles (10 km) daily through the mine's tunnels to beat the anxiety.

"I ran with chopped-up boots at first and later they sent me sneakers. I'm well, I'm super-healthy and that's why I'm one of the first to leave," the 34-year-old Pena said before disappearing into his house.

Pena's athletic drive has caught the attention of runners around the world and landed him an invitation to the New York City Marathon.

His musical passions may soon expand his horizons too, after word got out that Pena had requested Presley tunes sent down the narrow bore hole that served as the miners' umbilical cord after they were discovered alive on August 22.

Graceland spokeswoman Alicia Dean said he and a guest had been invited for an all-expenses-paid trip to Presley's former home, now a museum and tourist attraction in Memphis, Tennessee.

(Reporting by Juana Casas in Copiapo, [Michelle Nichols](#) in New York, [Hugh Bronstein](#) in Santiago. Writing by Brad Haynes. Editing by Simon Gardner and [Peter Cooney](#))



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