

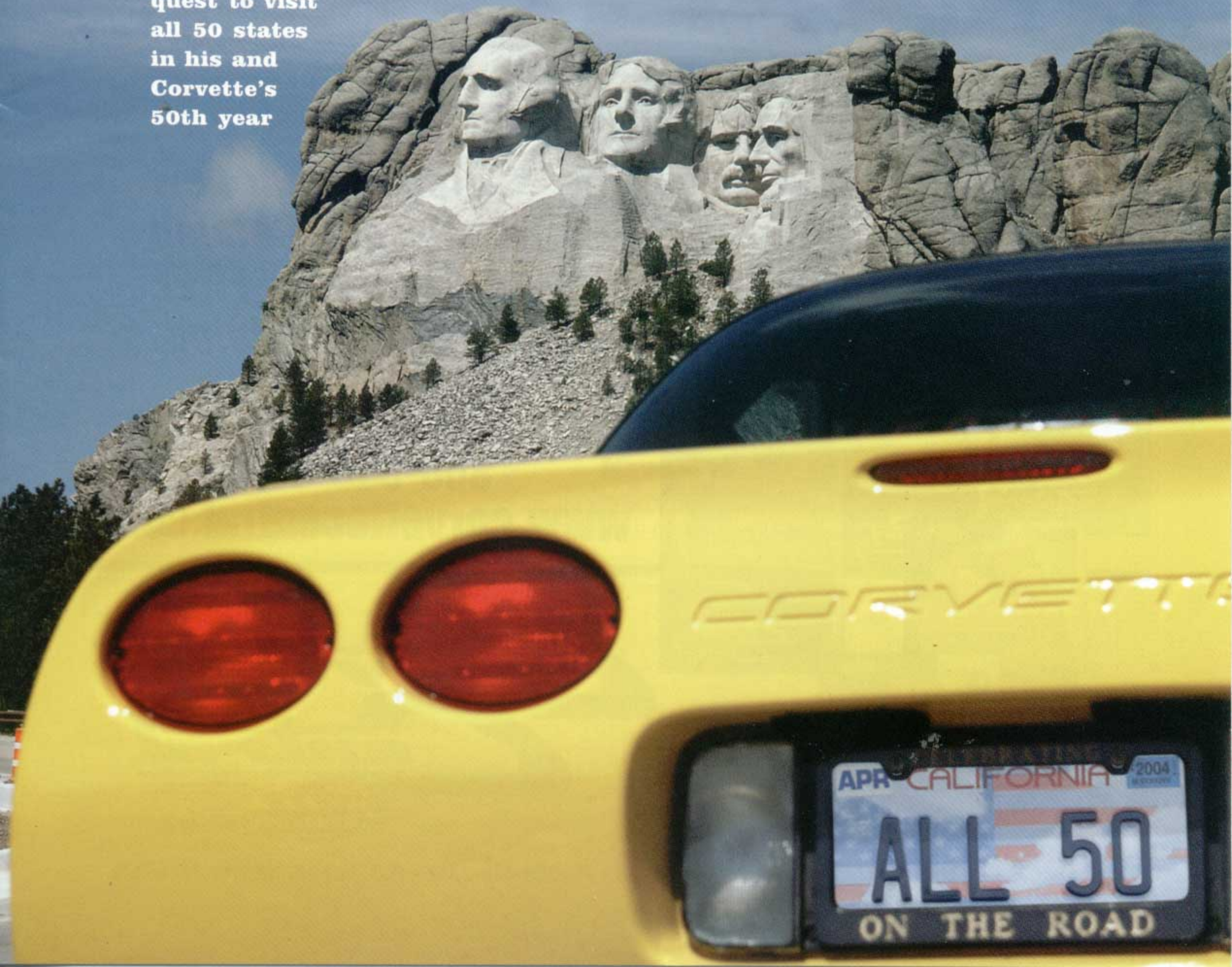
CORVETTE RACING SWEEPS GTS CHAMPIONSHIPS NOVEMBER 2003 \$2.95

America's Sports Car

PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL CORVETTE MUSEUM

All American Road Trip

Ray Ehly, Jr.'s
quest to visit
all 50 states
in his and
Corvette's
50th year



All American Road Trip

Clockwise this page: Ehly at the tennis shoe tree in Nevada; the Card; working out his route in Washington; in Winslow, Arizona.



WORD PROBLEM:

In 2003, America's sports car turns 50. In 2003, Ray Ehly, Jr. turns 50. There are 50 states. How does Ray celebrate his and Corvette's 50th year?

If you replied, visit all 50 states in a 2003 Z06, give yourself 50 points.



In a road trip lasting 63 days, four hours and 21 minutes, Ehly left Bowling Green, Kentucky in his brand-new Millennium Yellow rocket only to return some 22,796 miles later, just in time for Corvette's 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Why?

"I have been building roads for the past 25-plus years," says Ehly. "I figured I might as well drive 'em. I've always wanted to see our country. Part of it comes from hearing the old Chevrolet jingle, 'See the USA in your Chevrolet.' What better way to do it than in a Corvette?"

The Corvette seed was planted early in Ehly by his grandfather, Jake, a Chevrolet dealer in Minnesota



who would take his grandson for test drives in the new Corvettes.

"The

50-50-50 road trip was inspired by seeing the 50th Anniversary Corvette at the 2002 Monterey Historic event," says Ehly.

"During the weekend I went to the Chevrolet tent numerous times to look at the Corvettes. I mentioned to my fiancée, Karen, that Corvette turns 50, I turn 50; I ought to buy one and drive all 50 states!"

"Are you crazy?" was Karen's response.

Ehly went home and pulled out his maps. He traced routes and alternate routes, calculated mileage and time. He worked out a leave of absence with his company and a bank loan to finance the trip. And he ordered his new Z06, choosing yellow since "it was as close to gold as I could get, gold being the traditional 50th anniversary color," says Ehly.

He flew to Nashville from California and took Museum Delivery of his new car on April 23, 2003. Thrilled with his sophisticated machine, Ehly couldn't wait to get started on his trip.

That night in his hotel room, he received a call from an air transport company. An opportunity to fly his car to Hawaii had opened up. Could he be in Los Angeles in less than a week?

Ehly pulled out the maps again. Originally he had planned to drive the East Coast first. Now he stayed up most of the night reconfiguring his immediate route toward the West Coast. He sets off from the NCM April 25th en route to Los Angeles.

It's Not the Destination, But the Journey

Just like Glenn Fry, Ehly is standing on the corner in Winslow, Arizona, trying to take a picture of the rock star's likeness in bronze. It isn't a girl in a flatbed Ford, however, that slows down to take a look at him, but one of Winslow's finest in a police cruiser. The officer parks and reached for his radio to call in the temporary tag on the shiny, new Vette. Ehly is prepared.

"I take his picture, then I walk up and present 'the Card.'"

The Card, a slick, two-sided business card that explains Ehly's mission, "saved a lot of explaining," says the road tripper. Since this would be the first of dozens of police stops, it also "saved a lot of possible tickets."

At Waikiki Beach



Journey's end at the NCM



Says Ehly, "The officer looks at the Card, looks at the car, looks at me, and says, 'I'll move my car so you can get your picture.'"

The All 50 Road Trip made it to Los Angeles in time for the flight to Hawaii, but when the locals in Honolulu hear that Ehly is returning stateside after only five hours in the islands, they shake their heads. "You local, man!" Ehly chooses to take it as a complement.

From Hawaii back to L.A., as the Road Trip works its way up the Pacific Northwest and on to Alaska. Recalls Ehly, "I saw more bikes, hot rods and Corvettes in and around Anchorage than anyplace else I've been. They were all out cruising in the rain, waving and having a great time."

Route 50 in Nevada is considered America's loneliest road. As Ehly cruises the desolate desert highway, he is amazed to see a tree with more than 100 pairs of shoes hanging from its branches. He makes a u-turn and pulls up alongside the tree for a better look and a photo. Two more travelers stop to contemplate the significance of tennis shoes hanging in the high desert. Ehly tells them of his own journey, and they introduce themselves as documentary filmmakers Roko Belic and Ralph Leighton. They're on their way to the Telluride film festival where their Academy Award-nominated feature, "Genghis Blues," is up for consideration. Leighton offers to take Ehly's picture by the tree.

"And this road is lonely?" asks Ehly.

No Corvette road trip would be complete without a pilgrimage to General Motor's headquarters in Detroit. Ehly was "laying in the street taking a picture of the Z06 when the front door opens and a suit comes walking up to me. 'What are you doing?'"

It was Don Garlit, "a retired financial guru called back by GM on special assignment," relates Ehly, who, after explaining his mission, engages Garlit in a conversation about the inner workings of GM.

Journey's End

The All 50 Road Trip ended June 26, 2003, precisely where it began, in front of the National Corvette Museum. That day, as thousands of Corvettes pour onto Museum grounds as part of the National Caravan groundswell, the arrival of one lone Z06 goes largely unnoticed. But what Ehly achieved in his 63 days on the road, the effort and the

planning involved, is mind-boggling.

"Corvette enthusiasts are a diverse group," notes Ehly. "Some were totally thrilled [with the project], some were passive. Some wanted to know why I would want to put that many miles on a Corvette, and some thought I was just plum crazy. The reactions from the Corvette enthusiasts were similar to people in general. The road trip really opened my eyes to the diversity that exists in America today.

"I feel fortunate and blessed to have been able to accomplish this journey. It truly has given me a new appreciation for our country, our freedom, and what we stand for."