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Touching THEM ALL

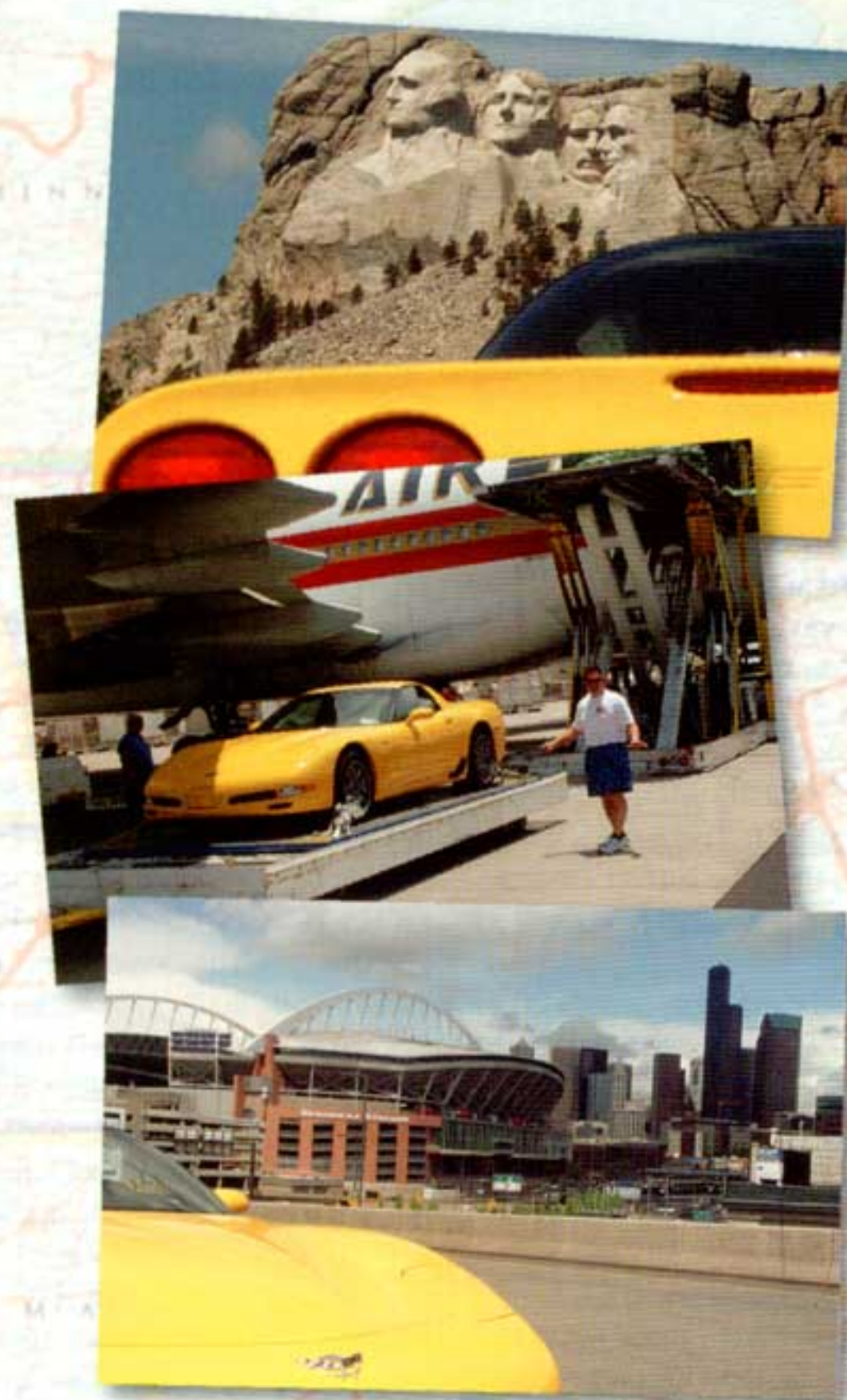
Story and photos by Ray Ehly Jr.

You want to talk wanderlust? I'll give you wanderlust. Growing up in Minnesota and North Dakota, I never saw much of the USA as a kid. Eventually something had to give, and last year it did. Corvette turned 50, I turned 50, and the 50 states beckoned so loudly I could no longer ignore them. Seeing them all on the way to Corvette's 50th Anniversary celebration was a natural. There was only one problem: I picked up my new Millennium Yellow Z06 in Bowling Green barely two months ahead of the celebration, so my tag-all-50 sweep would have to be quick. And it was: In just 63 days I drove my new Vette exactly 22,796 miles to visit the capitals (except four) and at least one other major city in every state, including Hawaii and Alaska.

Traveling mostly solo and during daylight hours, I was in the Corvette eight to 12 hours a day and I could not believe how comfortable it was. And economical — the Z06 averaged 23.4 mpg along the way. People ask if I was bored, but there was never time to be. Between the roads, signs and worrying about the route, I didn't have a chance for either boredom or introspection.

To meet so many people, see the diversity of our country firsthand, and observe different attitudes from the cities of the east to the vast expanses of the west was incredible. Still, a few highlights remain etched in my brain — and in my computer as some of the 4,000-plus images I took along the way. Perhaps the craziest was hustling from Kentucky to California to airfreight the Corvette from L.A. to Honolulu — for a five-hour stay. At sunrise, upon unloading the Z06 from the belly of a 747, the Hawaiian crew found out I was only going to be on Oahu for five hours. "You're loh' loh (without brains) man!" one of them shouted. I took that as a compliment.

My only ticket occurred outside of Scottsbluff, Neb. In stopping me, the state trooper indicated the last time he gave a ticket to an "important person," he almost got



tarred and feathered. I asked if he had learned anything from that experience and whether he could let me go. "You're on tape!" he scolded.

And finally, in downtown New York City, parked on the sidewalk next to the site of the former World Trade Center, I read a mural on the side of a nearby building. "The human spirit is not measured by the size of the act," it said, "but by the size of the heart."

The trip was fun, but the sign reminded me how grateful I am for my health, my family and the country we live in. **CQ**

Ray Ehly Jr. is a road-construction manager living in Reno, Nev. Besides his well-traveled 2003 Z06, he also has a 1970 Corvette LS5 convertible. To learn more about his journey, go to all50corvette.com.

