

SGT TIM MCCARTHY

INDIANA STATE POLICE

A NOTRE DAME STORY

(From the "Spirit of Notre Dame" by Jim and Jeremy Langford)

"Who wants to listen to a policeman telling everyone to behave themselves?" Tim McCarthy asked himself. He knew the answer.

The year was 1960, and McCarthy had just been promoted from trooper in the Indiana State Police to safety education sergeant. One of his new responsibilities was to make an announcement at Notre Dame home football games, reminding people to drive safely on the way home. But after two games he knew people weren't paying attention. He decided to change that by adding something to the message.

At the first home game in 1961, the message was about drinking and driving, and McCarthy ended it by saying, "The automobile replaced the horse, but the driver should stay on the wagon."

More than 220 stadium announcements later, fans in Notre Dame Stadium fall silent in eager anticipation during the fourth quarter when they hear, "May I have your attention please. This is Tim McCarthy from the Indiana State Police." They know what is coming: a reminder to drive carefully and courteously on the way home, punctuated by an often groan-inducing play on words. McCarthy says he got the wordplay idea from a friend of his, Chicago policeman Len Baldy, who used the device in the helicopter traffic reports he did for a radio station. Baldy gave McCarthy a few ideas to try at the Notre Dame games. After running through these and receiving a good response, it was up to McCarthy to keep the tradition alive.

Early on, the safety sergeant worried that the gag might be taken as trivializing the hard and dangerous work the state police perform, so he reverted to announcing the messages straight. But fans kept asking for the punch lines. McCarthy says he knew then that if he reinstated the punch lines, fans would listen more closely than ever.

These days when he makes the announcements, McCarthy identifies himself as "for" the Indiana State Police rather than "of" because he retired from the force in December

1978 after being elected the Sherriff of Porter County. He later was appointed county tax assessor. In 1999 he retired from political life to form his own company, which does tax appraisal work for assessors.

The 68-year-old **(note - this book was written in 2005)** admits he still gets the jitters when he steps up to the mike. He says it's not easy coming up with new plays on words, so he keeps his ear out for them throughout the year. He gets a kick out of fans' reactions and says he doesn't mind when the lines aren't met with applause. "I've been booed a few times, but that is OK because I knew they listened to the safety announcement."

McCarthy says he has been contacted by the Seattle Supersonics (ND Alumni work for the team), the Chicago Bears, and other nationally recognized sports teams interested in having him make announcements for them. But the loyal Notre Dame fan has yet to take his safety-minded wordplay on the road.

TIM MCCARTHY'S **PERSONAL TOP TEN**

10. **"Don't let your day go down the drain by forgetting today's safety plug."**
9. **"When it is only coffee for the road... there's always grounds for safety."**
8. **"It takes a strong heart to drive on clogged arteries."**
7. **"No one relishes a pickled driver."**
6. **"Anyone whose driving sparkles... is a real gem."**
5. **"Keep your driving well polished to avoid having a bad finish."**
4. **"Horsing around in traffic after dark could become a real nightmare."**
3. **"You can always bank on safety... for your best interest."**
2. **"Drinking drivers are like light bulbs: The first to get turned on are the first to burn out"**
1. **"Anyone who tries to bolt through traffic.. is a real nut."**