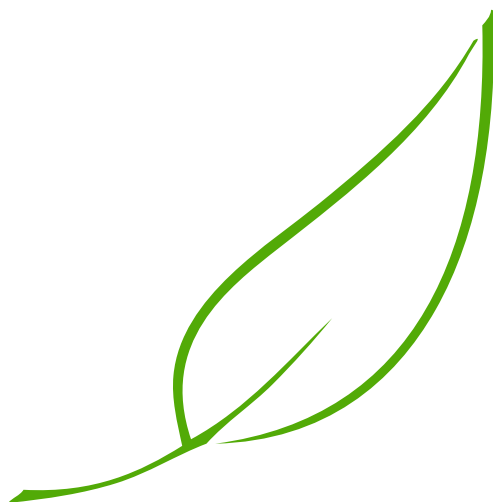


# FIRST & TEN WITH THE BALL AT THE GATE

by Ken Bradbury



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**First and Ten**  
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**MAN:** *(walks haltingly up to the pearly gates)* Wow! The Pearly Gates! I can't believe I'm really here. I hope there isn't any mistake. And it's air-conditioned! Even better than I had imagined. Now that's weird ... my arthritis doesn't even mind the chill.

**PETE:** *(swings open the gate)* Well, hello there! Welcome! I'm St. Pete. We've been expecting you.

**MAN:** Really? Hey, that's great. You know these Pearly Gates are even better than I'd heard.

**PETE:** And these are just the outside Gates. Wait 'til you get a load of the nice stuff.

**MAN:** Uhh ... Am I dressed all right for this. I mean, this faded football jersey isn't the most ...

**PETE:** You look just fine. Hang around awhile and you'll see we don't put much stock in appearances up here. Don't get us confused with where you came from. Now ... uh ... *(checking his clipboard)* ... You're a bit late.

**MAN:** Sorry. I hope I haven't done anything wrong. I had to put away the equipment.

**PETE:** I understand. *(smiles)* Seems like there's always one more thing to do. So you're looking for your place, eh?

**MAN:** *(falters a bit)* This is my first game in this ... uh ... stadium. Do I need... you know ... to take a quiz or something?

**PETE:** *(grins).* A quiz? You've been listening to too many barroom jokes, No, you should know better. You don't have to qualify after you get here.

**MAN:** Of course. *(pause)* So what are you ...

**PETE:** What am I doing here? Well, even though getting here is a gift, there's still the matter of lodgings ... accommodations ... you know, housing.

**MAN:** Oh, was I supposed to call ahead?

**PETE:** That'd be tough. Our 800 number's unlisted and most of our customers can't afford Internet. No, you made your reservation a long time ago. Now let me check your file. (*thumbs through papers on his clipboard*) It says your occupation was ... here it is ... Coach! You're a football coach?

**MAN:** That's right. (*looks for hint of disdain or approval. Nothing.*) You a fan of the game?

**PETE:** Sort of

**MAN:** No kiddin'! Which team?

**PETE:** (*smiles*) The Saints. Season tickets. We don't get many of your type but it says here that you were a believer and that's all we require. You're as welcome as anybody else. Now just what type of housing did you have in mind?

**MAN:** (*looks down at his worn spikes*) Uh ... well I was thinking about ... you know, maybe, just a small mansion.

**PETE:** Mansion! (*his eyes go heavenward ... in this case behind him and gives a broad grin*) They're all mansions!

**MAN:** Oh, I should have thought of that. I haven't worked out this game plan yet. No scouting reports. No videos. I've ... uh ... always liked water. You know, some water skiing, a porch extending out over the lake.

**PETE:** Sorry. Housing up here is pro-rated according to the suffering endured on earth. All the lake front property is owned by the Third World folks.

**MAN:** Oh. Well, how about something in the mountains. I went to the Rockies once. Really liked the air.

**PETE:** (*flips through listings*) Let's see ... mountains ... chalets, cabins, lodges ... sorry, coach. That all goes to grandmothers and school secretaries. We've got a few pastors sprinkled here and there ... the ones who didn't drive Mercedes - - - and Mother Teresa. You gotta visit her place when she gets here. Gorgeous. Right between a lake AND a mountain. And I

hear the parties at her place are gonna be outa this world! I mean even outa THIS world!

**MAN:** Wow. She must of had a great season.

**PETE:** Never won a game ... until she got to the championship

**MAN:** I'll even take a decent neighborhood. How about a place beside a few movie stars?

**PETE:***(checking his list)* Movie stars ... Well that narrows down your choices quite a bit. We only get a few now and then ... mostly old cowboy stars.

**MAN:** *(somewhat embarrassed)* Well ... how about a big yard. I mean, the view wouldn't be that important as long as I had some room to throw a few passes.

**PETE:** Passes?

**MAN:** Passes. You know ... first and ten, do it again?

**PETE:** Sorry, I guess I don't understand. Up here we just do it once ... and it lasts forever.

**MAN:** I mean just a little patch of grass, you know?

**PETE:** OK. Lawn, eh? Let's check the real estate flyer ... *(takes out of his robe pocket and begins to scan the listings)* Lawns, yards, estates, pastures ... green and otherwise ... verandahs. Hmmm. There doesn't seem to be anything.

**MAN:** *(a little desperate)* I'll settle for somethin' small ... maybe just a back yard ... wouldn't even have to have a pool if that's all you've got.

**PETE:** Not much call for pools, I'm afraid. We aren't the ones in need of cooling off.

**MAN:** Darn.

**PETE:** Watch it.

**MAN:** Hub?

**PETE:** That's better.

**MAN:** Don't you have anything?

**PETE:** I'm looking. I'm looking. *(searching)* You like pets? I've got a bungalow with a built-in kennel.

**MAN:** *(sadly shakes head no)* Allergies. Dogs make me sneeze.



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*by Ken Bradbury.*

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