

"I sucked badly..."

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One envisions a child failing to consume his lollypop with artistry and grace.

But no, this was quarterback Tom Brady, after the Patriots-Ravens game. One has to admire his forthrightness and honesty even while cringing at the grammar.

And despite his less-than-stellar performance, and the close score that left us with our nails gnawed, The Pats move on now to the Superbowl.

The ALA awards have been announced, and I am thrilled for Jack Gantos...practically my neighbor....and also for my very dear friend Ashley Bryan...as well as Chris Raschka...and my heart goes out to some others who were high on so many lists but just somehow failed to make the cut. I cannot imagine the difficult job of the committee. I was once a judge (with four others) for the National Book Awards and I remember how tough that was.

I also remember, with a warm blush of shame, an idiotic thing I did during that judging procedure. We five judges (me, Katherine Paterson, Michael Cart, Julius Lester, and Robert Lipsyte) all lived in different locations, not surprisingly. This was way back when computers were new-ish to most of us, and when I still used AOL for my email. I carefully created a group AOL address for my four colleagues...I think it was probably something like This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it each time I had finished reading maybe 10 books, I sent the group an email with my carefully-phrased opinions. It was a little annoying after a while that they never replied. But we had several conference calls and so I had a chance to repeat the thoughts that I had already sent them.

Some weeks into the process, I had once again sent off the group email describing my reactions to a list of nominated books. But this time I got a reply. It was from a man. I didn't save it, so can't quote exactly, but it was very polite and said something like: *I have very much*

enjoyed hearing from you over the past weeks, and I am interested in what you are reading and how you feel about it. But I have begun to suspect that you are addressing your emails to the wrong person. I'm fairly sure we have never met...

So: as you can see, I sucked badly as a judge. We got the job done anyway. So did the Patriots.

Tags: Untagged