

It used to be that I couldn't do ikkyo. Now I can't do ikkyo, nikkyo, sankyo, yonkyo,...

Oh, I go through the motions, and partners mostly go down, but that's not it. For instance, every so often Doran sensei shows the fifth kyu test in class, and I can't do it anymore. I can pass, but that's not it.

It used to be that what I did was similar to what the senseis showed. Changes suggested to me were pretty straightforward. Now I realize that what I did and do, and what the senseis do, are worlds apart. I just didn't know what was going on. Now I know just enough to realize that I scarcely know a sliver of what happens right in front of me.

Oddly enough, I'm encouraged. Practice asks its own questions, the ones that count. Practice answers its own questions, insofar as it matters. I play scales; senseis play music. At least now some of my notes are the same.

And once every couple of years, I get off the Line. I feel the Rainbow Bridge underfoot. Ueshiba of Aikido visits.

Where else do non-violence, self-defense, and satori merge?

I used to run across Bad Uke or Bad Nage, once in a while, but not any more. All my partners have gotten so much better, even the ones just stepping on the mat for the first time. My most sincere

"Thank you all for allowing me to practise with you."

The imperceptible seam between Here and Not-Here is a gulf, 10,000 parsecs across. Jump in.

Paul Thomas
June, 2011