



routine seems to be a unique feature of the Wat Pah Pong tradition – and you have to be seriously dedicated to hearing Dhamma to even want, let alone be able, to sit on a hard floor for ten hours. Understanding the language too, is a distinct advantage. Most people nip off for a small rest at some point in the evening; but some seem to sit motionless throughout, in a kind of ‘Desana trance’. The first couple of speakers talk for about an hour; after that it’s half an hour each. So, altogether fifteen or so Dhamma Talks ring throughout the forest on loudspeakers right through till dawn. A bell is struck to let any speaker who’s getting a bit carried away know that his 30 minutes are up. The style of Desana is usually unstructured, which is typical of the Thai forest tradition. Anyone who miscalculates his allotted time therefore can easily wrap it up and make way for the next speaker when he hears the bell. The last speaker is still going at full speed at 5 a.m. as the monks, one last time, begin to set up the eating hall and then stream out the gates towards the waiting armada of almsround road transport.



On this last morning the Sangha and laity gather in the sala one final time, to take leave and ask forgiveness of the most senior monks. After a week of remembrance dedicated to Luang Por Chah, it seems fitting that the endnote

is an acknowledgement of our present-day teachers. Luang Por Liem, appointed by Luang Por Chah to be his successor as abbot of Wat Pah Pong, receives the traditional offerings of toothwoods – wooden toothbrushes made from a bitter vine that the monks meticulously fashion in advance and bring to the gathering to give to senior Ajahns as a token of respect.

After a few words of farewell and one last blessing the 2009 memorial gathering is over. The last meal is taken and followed by a mass exodus. Thousands of mosquito nets are taken down and tents dismantled; vans are loaded; as many as 15 people crammed in to the back of a pickup truck for journeys of up to several hundred kilometres. Rubbish is collected and areas swept. In the eating hall the spittoons are dried one last time, the water bottles bagged up for recycling, the sitting mats put away. Within a few hours the monastery feels deserted. Only the resident community of forty or so monks and the nuns in their own section remain, doing the final clear up.

The following day is a Sunday. In the afternoon some visitors including a couple from Bangkok stop by Wat Pah Pong to pay respects, and hopefully make some offerings to Luang Por Liem. A lone monk sweeps the concrete road around the Chedi,

