Gloria Smith, camp cook, was a legend at U.C.F.K. for many years and camp for kidders developed a great affection for her. She was the only paid person at the camps but whatever she was paid was short for the contribution she made.

While not a professional caterer, she transformed her home recipes into meals for the hundred or so campers; at the same time being especially good with home sick or troubled young campers, wise counsel for the leaders and a good friend to all.

The camp kitchen facilities were very basic. An old oil fired stove, a warming oven and, well, that was about it really. I remember the giant stew pot, scores of eggs being cooked for breakfast, “all-in” soup which included many leftovers, and roast dinner days with mutton legs, potatoes, pumpkin and peas or beans all being cooked throughout the afternoon on hot days in a hot kitchen with fans rotating overhead. Desserts included custards, jellied fruit, baked puddings and ice cream. The final day of each camp featured a party menu – “little boys” and sauce, party pies, fairy bread and hundreds of cup cakes followed by ice cream in a cone.

Rostered “kitchen moles” took care of the dining room washing up usually making such a mess as to drag out the process to twice the time it could have taken. More superior “assistant cooks” took care of the famously extensive “pot wash”.

Gloria’s partner, Johnny “Botts” (Bottrell) would usually arrive each night after his work as an electrician and help out and in some years Gloria’s brother “Muzza” would sign on as kitchen “hand”. John’s name for Gloria was “Gert”. Gloria’s comfortable accommodation was in the administration building, away from the late night and early morning shenanigans and out of bounds to lesser mortals.

Some years after Gloria retired her life was cut short in a road accident and a large number of camp for kidders attended her funeral at Fremantle Cemetery. Long will she be remembered, respected and loved by those who knew and worked with her.

Anecdote courtesy of Richard Truscott, photos courtesy of Shelley Hatton, Roger and Helen Gray and Ian Slater