

# Back to work at 92, Graham still sparkles

## Part-time assistant has 'energy levels beyond compare' on new job

By Beth Duckett  
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Ann Graham's friends call her sharp, witty and loquacious. She meets people easily and can lighten up any situation with sparkling eyes and rapid-fire humor. "I always try to look on the good side," she said.

Two months ago, Graham took a job at Scottsdale's Rose Law Group firm — and in the process, made herself an inspiration to victims of the economic downturn, particularly older workers among Arizona's unemployed.

On Monday, Graham will turn 93, arguably making her Arizona's oldest new hire.

Following the death of Mortgages Ltd. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Scott Coles in June 2008, Graham lost \$100,000 of her savings through the troubled private mortgage bank.

With no principle to invest, she decided to return to work.

Jordan Rose, president of Rose Law Group, over lunch offered Graham an administrative job. Rose, a longtime friend of Graham's, needed a part-time assistant to help out when her receptionist took maternity leave, she said.

"I thought, My goodness, what friendlier person do I know in the entire universe other than Ann Graham?" Rose said.

Hired temporarily at first, Graham decided to stay on and work part-time hours. Three days a week, she catches rides with the firm's personal concierge so she doesn't have to drive.

"She's got some economic issues, as does everyone at these times," Rose said. "She relies on the stock market to get her income."

On most days, Graham's desk is stacked with lopsided legal papers and business cards that read "office muse." When she smiles, which is often, her cheeks glow white behind ruby-red lips. "I've been very talented in the business



world," said Graham, who lives at the Phoenix Towers on Central Avenue. "It's a gift, you know."

Money had never been a big issue for Graham. She is the former vice president of two companies, but quit her job 40 years ago to pursue her life's hobby — playing golf. After that, she made headlines raising money for Valley charities. Born in 1916 and reared in northern California, she first worked for a company that sold instruments and gave music lessons. Later, she attended business school and studied shorthand for four hours a day, finishing a yearlong course in only 90 days.

Graham's career was jump-started when a top welding consultant singled her out to be a high-paid secretary. In the years following, she would christen a baby, move to Okinawa, and dance under the stars with West Point graduates. Because living expenses were paid, Graham's salary went into savings and she accumulated enough to take a vacation.

Afterward, Graham moved to Phoenix and worked a bevy of jobs, including positions in the cosmetic and modeling industries. When she "retired" in her 50s, she dedicated much of her life to charity work and fashion-show fundraisers, which earned her a reputation as a non-profit gold mine.

"When I quit my job and started to play golf, I said it's time to stop and count my blessings," Graham said. "People used to say, 'If you want to fill a room, call Ann.'"

With meticulous gray-blond hair and an appetite for fashion, Graham scored a

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spot on Arizona Trends 1991 list of the town's best-dressed women (also selected for their involvement in the community). That was the year Graham met Paradise Valley resident Carolyn Ross,

also a "best-dressed" winner.

The two women have worked together at Phoenix's Valley of the Sun School, now VALLEYLIFE, and other charities.

"I would describe Ann as a unique individual with energy levels beyond compare," Ross said. "And a friend to everyone who meets her."

When she heard about Graham's new job, Ross said she was "inspired." She was amazed by Graham's drive and dedication. "I'm so thrilled she's doing so well at almost 93 years old," she said.

Graham, who plans to continue working at Rose Law Group, has one regret in life — not keeping a diary.

Several times she has been asked to write a book. But without written memoirs, she can't remember exact dates and details.

"It's my only regret," Graham said. "You've got to remember, I'm almost 93 now."