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A NEW START AFTER 60: I GOT DIVORCED AND BECAME A LAWYER

After an interval as Isabella Rossellini's hand model, Elizabeth Barbour went to law school at 54. Now, she is working on 50 domestic violence cases and says her career is a privilege, not a job. Elizabeth Barbour didn't start studying law until she was 54 and had a school-age daughter. "But once I decide to do something, I'm hard to stop," she says.

Law is an atypical later-life career choice. It certainly had no connection with Barbour's first and second vocations, as a hand model and then a property developer. "Law school was hard. It was disheartening," she says. "I was literally everybody's mother's age. I didn't have a cohort of friends. I was like a foreigner. I felt really isolated".

One day, after a negotiation exercise, the professor told her: "I've never had a student be able to work the table like you did". She spent time with family-law attorneys and "began to realize that this would be my area". After graduating, she worked for a firm that dealt with wealthy individuals. "But that's just a lawyer helping you to argue over money," she says. "I didn't want to do that." She became a licensed lawyer at her second attempt. Soon after, at 60, she got a job with the Legal Aid Society in her home town of Roanoke, Virginia. By then, her marriage had ended. In retrospect, she says, going to law school was "a declaration of selfhood".

Now 68, Barbour is working on 50 domestic violence cases. The work is emotionally exhausting – and rewarding. "These amazing women have been kicked around the block and are able to say: 'Enough.' When they come to me, they are ready for a change. I can give them legal help and play an active role in their life as they are transitioning from one place to another." Barbour considers her career a "happy accident". Until she was 54, she had "a freewheeling kind of life – but never without direction". Barbour believes that she has found her calling. Initially, the courtroom was frightening. "But my mum always said: 'Do what you're afraid to do.' These days, the fear has gone. It's more and more rewarding. I love my office. I love my clients. I

see no end to my career. It is a privilege, not a job".

Adapted from an article by Paula Coccozza, The Guardian, 17-2-2025.

Part I. Reading Comprehension

1. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Identify the part of the text that supports your answer by copying the exact passage on the answer sheet. (2 points: 0.5 point each)

- Elizabeth Barbour was a lawyer before working as a hand model.
- Elizabeth believes that being a lawyer is her mission.
- Barbour had two different jobs before becoming a lawyer.
- When Elizabeth graduated, she worked for rich people.

2. Answer the following questions using your own words but taking into account the information in the text. (2.5 points: 1.25 point each)

- Why does Barbour say that Law school was a hard experience?
- How does Elizabeth describe her work as a lawyer now?

3. Find a synonym for each of the four words below from these six options. All words are underlined in the text (1 point: 0.25 point each)

isolated cohort rewarding amazing attempt freewheeling

- group
- lonely
- extraordinary
- self-sufficient

4. Choose a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct. (1.5 points: 0.5 point each)

- Elizabeth Barbour says that ...
 - her work is an opportunity rather than a job.
 - her duty is to find a privileged work.
 - her job is to work for privileged women.
 - her dream is to become an important judge.

2. One of Barbour's professors ...
- a) made her feel isolated and very old.
 - b) praised her negotiation skills.
 - c) complimented her on the way she sat at the table.
 - d) told her that she would not become a lawyer.

3. For Barbour, the courtroom...
- a) used to be frightening but it isn't anymore.
 - b) Is still frightening.
 - c) was difficult and she took her mum with her.
 - d) was scary for everyone including her and her mum.

Part II. Composition (130 to 150 words approximately) (3 points)

5. Choose one of these two topics and write a composition about it.

- A. Do you think that it is possible to change your career later in life? You may include the pros and cons of such a change in your answer.
- B. What would you like to do for a living? Think of your dream job.