

# 10 QUESTIONS FOR ERIN BROCKOVICH

**T**hanks to her investigative efforts, residents of Hinkley, Calif., won a settlement against Pacific Gas & Electric for contaminating their groundwater. And thanks to her, Julia Roberts won an Academy Award for depicting that struggle. Now Brockovich brings *TIME*'s Michele Orecklin up to date on her life since the movie.



**WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?** Another case against PG&E, involving chromium 6 in groundwater in Kettleman City, which is off Interstate 5 in California. The case started in 1995.

**HAS WORKING ON THIS CASE BEEN DIFFERENT FROM WORKING ON THE LAST ONE?** The

movie blew my cover. Now when I'm investigating, people say, "We're not talking to you without a lawyer." In other cases, it's been good and I get what I need quickly.

**WHAT ARE PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS WHEN THEY MEET YOU?** They expect me to dress a certain way. They're shocked if I

sometimes wear a sweatshirt. They expect me to be aggressive, which I'm not. When I go into a community, I could never be that way or people wouldn't talk to me. I'm a better listener than anyone realizes.

**DO A LOT OF PEOPLE CONTACT YOU TO HELP THEM?** People think that because we pre-

vailed in Hinkley, we can help in any case of injustice, but if we can't prove all the facts or a component is missing, we just can't do it.

**HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT GOING TO LAW SCHOOL?** I don't want to—it's boring. I have great respect for lawyers, but a good deal of their job is writing motions and being in court all day. I like to be around people. I'm afraid that as a lawyer, I'd lose my ability to do that.

**WHAT ABOUT RUNNING FOR OFFICE?** If I thought I could make a difference, maybe, but I'm not convinced of that yet.

**DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOURSELF IN THE MOVIE, OR DOES IT SEEM LIKE SOMEONE DIFFERENT?** I know it's my name, but I don't associate with the name as much as the event. It would feel great to say I'm a lone ranger and did everything myself, but the people of Hinkley and judges and so many other people helped the case come to fruition.

**WHAT ELSE ARE YOU DOING?** Writing a second book, a lot of lectures. I've done two talk-show pilots, and I'm waiting to see if they get picked up.

**HOW HAS FAME AFFECTED YOUR KIDS?** We went from having no money to being flooded with material things. That catapulted them into experimenting with drugs and alcohol. I slammed my foot down and sent them to rehab. Now they're doing fantastic.

**HAS YOUR STYLE CHANGED?** Wardrobe people have tried to help me. But changing my image doesn't feel right. I have fun with the way I dress. I still like my low-cut tops and high heels, but I like Armani better.

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