



Erin Brockovich is interviewed by NBC reporter Patrick Healy before Thursday's preview screening of the movie that bears her name.

Lara Hartley/Staff Photographer

# 'Erin Brockovich' rings true to life

► **MOVIE:** Screening was for plaintiffs in the massive settlement against PG&E.

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BARSTOW — When the ending credits rolled and the lights came up after the preview screening of "Erin Brockovich," Sherry Vinson unsuccessfully fought back tears.

"I know a lot of lives that have been destroyed — generations of them," Vinson said. "It's amazing to me that a company that's supposed to be your friend would poison you and lie about it."

Vinson was among the 500 guests in attendance Thursday night for a private screening of the movie, which was shown in three theaters of the Barstow Station Cinema. The movie opens nationwide today.

Vinson and her husband, Jerry, were among 640 plaintiffs in the settlement with Pacific Gas and Electric. Both said it was an accurate portrayal of the case.

"It was somewhat Hollywoodized, but I believe it was a fair depiction of what happened," Jerry Vinson said. "It was a fair depiction of how large corporations do things."

For many in attendance, "Erin

Brockovich" is much more than a Julia Roberts movie. Brockovich is a real person who made a difference.

When the real Brockovich arrived for the screening, members of the press made a beeline for her. For Brockovich, the first priority was to greet a throng of Hinkley residents.

Brockovich, who attended the star-studded Hollywood premiere on Tuesday, said the Barstow event was the most important screening she's attended.

"This is probably the most nerve-racking event for me," she said. "The impact of this movie is significant. Terrible corporate deceit happened to the most beautiful people I've seen in my life.

"I love these people, they are the salt and pepper of the earth. The injustice that happened to them bothers me greatly, and I hope to stay friends with them forever."

Brockovich said Roberts' portrayal of her was accurate, right down to the clothes and the attitude.

"Everybody knows I wear high heels and short skirts," she said.

Ed Masry, the attorney who mortgaged his home to take on the case, said he appreciated the

Hinkley residents who took on the fight against PG&E.

"We all went through a horrible, difficult journey," Masry said. "What you see in the movie is what happened. It's a historically accurate portrayal of what PG&E did. You can't deny the facts.

"This is probably the first time in history that 640 plaintiffs ever agreed on anything."

Before the film rolled, both Masry and Brockovich spoke to the audience in each of the three theaters, thanking them for their support during the case. Brockovich warned the movie may stir upsetting memories.

"Parts of this movie will make you sad and upset you," she told the audience. "You are all heroes, and I hope that it doesn't upset you that your suffering is something that America is going to see."

To that, an audience member yelled out, "We love you, Erin."

Most agreed the film was accurate, although there were embellishments. For example, in the movie, Masry gives Brockovich a cut of the settlement and the amount amazed her. In real life, she got more.