

10 Jeffrey Wigand

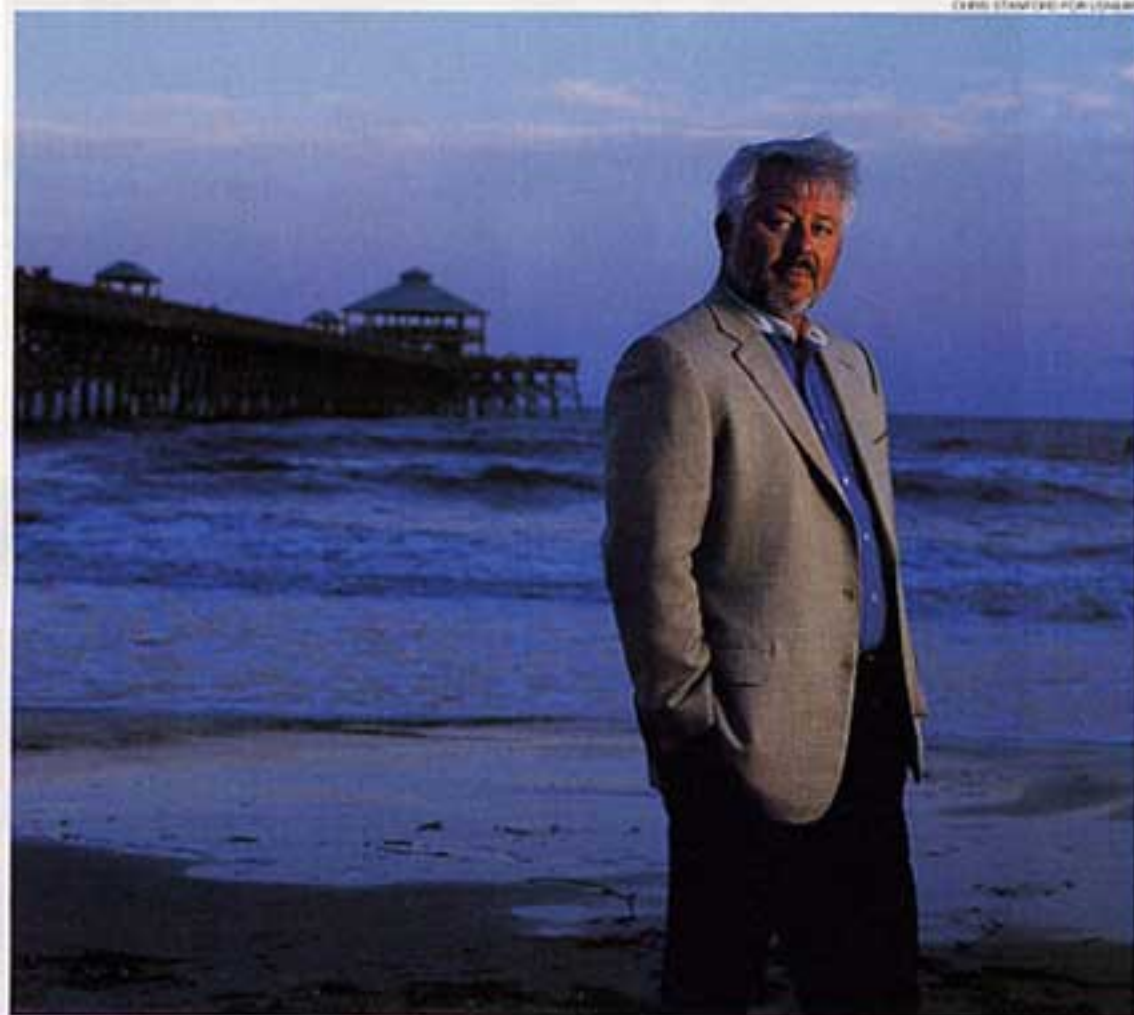
The insider who blew smoke at Big Tobacco

outraged. People followed Wigand home. He received threatening calls. He found a bullet in his mailbox. B&W sued him for violating a confidentiality agreement. The company even publicized unsubstantiated allegations of shoplifting and domestic abuse from Wigand's past. The pressure grew too intense for his wife. She filed for divorce and moved to Texas, taking their children. "I didn't expect my marriage to be at risk," he says.

The media, too, disappointed Wigand. In August 1995, he taped an interview with CBS's *60 Minutes* in which he accused B&W executives of lying to Congress and making their cigarettes more addictive. Fearing lawsuits, CBS lawyers balked. By the time the segment aired in February 1996, Wigand had endured two years of industry harassment. But it was worth it. The *60 Minutes* piece—as immortalized in the 1999 film *The Insider*—reinforced public distrust of Big Tobacco. And Wigand's damning court testimony helped pave the way for a 1998 "master settlement" in which the industry agreed to pay \$206 billion to 46 states for smoking-related medical expenses.

Today, Wigand's passion is working with kids. He taught high school science and Japanese, and he was named one of the country's top teachers in 1996. Before long, though, Wigand left Louisville. "The industry wouldn't leave me alone," he says. "They were subpoenaing my classroom records." In 1998 he moved to Charleston, S.C., to be near his father and close friends. He founded the nonprofit Smoke-Free Kids, which in-

forms students of the industry's plan to "hook them young, hook them for life." The former corporate executive still receives an occasional anonymous death threat, but he welcomes the resistance. "When I'm doing something right," he says, "the tobacco companies squeal." ●



Born: Dec. 17, 1942. **Personal:** Divorced, three children. **Greatest accomplishment:** Making a difference in students' lives. **Favorite movie:** *Star Wars*. **Yet to accomplish:** Stricter regulation of tobacco products, going to law and/or medical school. **When happiest:** In the classroom.

BY DAVID ENRICH

Jeffrey Wigand hadn't planned to risk everything to single-handedly take on the multibillion-dollar tobacco industry. But in the spring of 1993, Wigand—a fifth-degree black belt, Zen student, biochemistry Ph.D., and self-described "truth seeker"—found himself poised to do just that.

Five years earlier, Wigand had become the chief scientist at the Louisville, Ky.-based Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., eager to help develop a less addictive, less harmful cigarette. But he soon realized the company had a financial stake in addict-

ing people; Wigand was actually relieved when he was fired. "My daughters would come home from school asking me why I was killing people in my job," says Wigand, now 58. He had agreed to stay mum on company secrets, but his lingering guilt led him to start talking—even though it meant risking the severance package that his family (especially his middle daughter, who has spina bifida) depended on. In clandestine interviews with government investigators, lawyers, and journalists, Wigand helped interpret incriminating documents and disclosed detail after detail of what he had witnessed.

Industry executives were scared—and

JEFFREY WIGAND

John F. Kennedy. [For] the manner in which he dealt with Khrushchev and the Cuban missile crisis. [And] the manner in which he dealt with human values and integrity and so forth. I wished he would have survived the presidency and wasn't so untimely taken. . . . The man has qualities that I like and would love to have. ♣