

# The Times

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY

MONDAY  
MAY 6, 1996

LIGHT RAIN  
High 58, Low 50  
Details/A2

25 Cents

**DOLE VS. GOP**  
Republican candidate fights  
his party's tattered image, A9

**CANSECO COMING**  
Boston slugger scheduled to rehab  
with Thunder tomorrow evening C1

## Death and survival along tobacco road

By MATTHEW BUDMAN  
Staff Writer

As you might expect, there are no ashtrays in Richard Kluger's house.

Well, maybe a few.

"That's sort of an ashtray" — he points to a flowered ceramic dish on an end table — "but almost no one we know smokes anymore," he says. "But if they want to, we *do* let people smoke in here."

Still, if you feel self-conscious lighting up around Kluger, well, you should. This Montgomery Township writer has just seen the

publication of "Ashes to Ashes," an 800-page tome that chronicles the last century of American smoking. It's an ugly story, and a frustrating one, haunted by the ghosts of the millions killed by cigarettes.

While the book assigns blame for those 400,000 annual deaths to several sources — a good deal to the government, which has always treated tobacco companies with "kid gloves," and a bit to smokers themselves — most of the animus falls on Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds and the four other "merchants of death," as they're sometimes dubbed by the three-quarters of Americans who don't smoke.

"For a generation," Kluger says, "these com-

panies have chosen to deny, distort and belittle this mountain of evidence indicting cigarettes as mass killers, all for one purpose — to reassure their customers falsely."

He speaks this sentence slowly, deliberately — it's a practiced one, honed on "The Today Show" and "Charlie Rose," and prefaced with, "Here's a line I've been using" — and yet he delivers it with genuine feeling. Seven years of research haven't inured him to the damage tobacco has done to America.

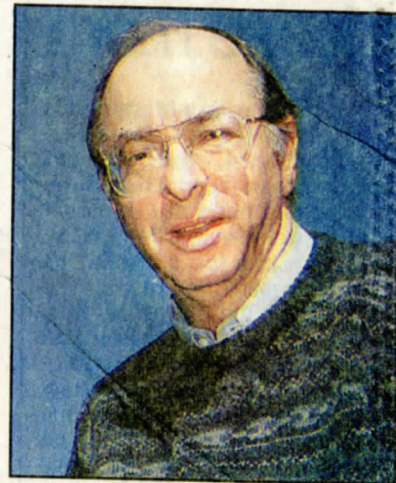
"Smoking is our leading public-health issue," he says. "Tobacco is the least-regulated consumer product and the most deadly. This has been a privileged character, this product.

Nobody's laid a glove on these people."

"Ashes to Ashes," which delves deeply into the internal workings and research of Philip Morris and R.J.R., is hardly flattering to the tobacco companies, though it affects a nonpartisan viewpoint and works hard to humanize executives of questionable morality.

"I'm sure the companies will think the book is unfair, but they are not going to get a more favorable book from anyone who's not taking their money," says Kluger. He bristles at an early Wall Street Journal review by "a right-

• see ASH, A5



Richard Kluger

