

Circulation
30,614

The Free Lance-Star

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Extra fine
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ESTABLISHED 1885

VOL. 99, NO. 134

FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 1983

25 CENTS

Winner in drug rehab case, now disowned and homeless

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP)—Fred Collins III won his freedom and his lawsuit, but in the process he lost his home.

Last month, Collins, a Virginia Tech sophomore, was awarded \$220,000 in damages from **Straight Inc.**, a drug rehabilitation program that allegedly held him against his will for more than 130 days.

But his parents, who have become believers in **Straight**, disowned him, he said in a recent interview. His younger brother won't speak to him. And until Collins receives the money won in court, he plans to live off loans and possible grants, he said.

Collins, 20, grew up on the outskirts of Alexandria, where his parents lived in a fashionable suburban home. By his account, he and his parents enjoyed a normal relationship.

"I thought we were the typical middle class family. Two kids, a dog, a beach house," he said.

Like many teen-agers, Collins and his younger brother, George, didn't always agree with their parents. The two brothers smoked



Fred Collins III
On his own now

marijuana with their friends on weekends.

Collins' parents were concerned about the problem George was hav-

ing with drugs. In January 1982, while Collins was a freshman at Tech, his parents enrolled George in a nationally known drug rehabilitation program called **Straight Inc.**, located in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Six months later, Collins traveled to the **Straight** facility at his parents' request, knowing he would be interrogated and "checked out." He had quit smoking marijuana a year before, but he wanted to see his brother, he said.

The visit began what he now calls a nightmare. In the recent trial in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Collins testified that he was held by **Straight** against his will and was physically and mentally abused.

The jury agreed Collins had been held against his will and awarded him \$220,000, \$40,000 to compensate Collins and \$180,000 to punish **Straight**. The jurors did not find that he was mentally and physically abused.

William Oliver, **Straight's** executive director, said Collins' allegations "were grossly exaggerated." **Straight** will appeal the jury verdict, he said.