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## Man's freedom costs him his family

Associated Press

BLACKSBURG, Va. — 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. after a federal jury decided that the drug rehabilitation program held him against his will for 133 days.

Collins said however, that after he fled the program his parents, who have become believers in Straight, disowned him. He said his younger brother, George, who is still in the program, won't speak to him.

"I tried to talk with them around Christmas and they didn't want to have anything to do with me," he said of his parents in a recent interview. "They still don't want to have anything to do with me. They think I'm a crazy drug fiend or something."

Straight's techniques and accomplishments have been praised by national anti-drug groups and received wide attention after Nancy

*The sophomore at Virginia Tech was awarded \$220,000 from a drug rehabilitation program.*

Reagan lauded its efforts during a visit to its St. Petersburg, Fla., facility. The program claims to have grown from 300 clients to 800 since 1976 with a budget of \$1.5 million a year.

Collins' parents declined to comment when contacted. However, during the trial in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, the father testified that his son "is no longer a part of his family (because) he chose to leave . . . It is my earnest hope that someday, when I am assured he is drug-free, I hope that we can reconstruct a family relationship."

Collins said his parents paid about \$6,000 or \$7,000 for their two children to participate in the program.

He said he will study mine engineering at Virginia Tech and continue the life he lived before the

incident with Straight. He said he expects that half the jury award will go to pay his lawyers and until he gets the money, he plans to live off loans and possible grants.

The jury agreed Collins had been held against his will and awarded him \$40,000 to compensate him 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" and Straight will appeal the verdict.

"The jury vindicated me," said Collins. The jurors "let me know they believed what I said. It's going to hurt (Straight). They're going to think twice about going out and kidnapping an adult."