

## Jury Awards \$2.5 Million to NBC Reporter's Ex-Fiance in Hamptons Log Cabin Dispute

BY ANDREW DENNEY

IN THE LATEST stage in a long-running legal fight between NBC reporter Jill Rappaport and her former groom-to-be over a pricey Western-style house in the Hamptons, a jury found for the erstwhile fiancé on his unjust enrichment claim.

Mintz secured the trial victory for investment banker Richard Swift before a Suffolk County jury of four women and two men, which also voted to award Swift \$2.57 million in damages after a seven-day trial in a legal dispute over a log house built on a Water Mill estate dubbed the “The Last Buck Ranch.”

“We are definitely pleased that the jury recognized that our client had been wronged by the defendant,” Mintz member Jason P.W. Halperin told the Law Journal. “The jury verdict, which awarded our client every single dollar of damages he had requested, amounted to a complete and utter vindication of our client’s position in this lawsuit. The fact that the jury deliberated for only about an hour and a half after a seven-day trial reinforces how strongly the jury believed that the evidence was for our client and amounts to a complete rejection of the defendant’s case.”

The jury found for Swift on his unjust enrichment claim but not on his breach of contract claim.

“From the beginning, my client denied the existence of any purported agreement with the plaintiff,” Rappaport’s attorney, Forchelli Deegan Terrana partner Richard Blumberg, said.

Blumberg declined to comment further on the verdict on the unjust enrichment claim. An attorney for Jill Rappaport’s mother Mona Rappaport, who co-owns property with her daughter and who was also a defendant in the case, did not respond to a request to comment.

Rappaport has hosted big-name celebrities at the ranch and the house at the center of her dispute with her ex-fiancé has been featured in “Architectural Digest.” Last year, she hosted a drive-in screening for a new Starz series at the ranch that drew the likes of 50 Cent, CNN’s Don Lemon, Christie Brinkley and John Leguizamo.

Swift was romantically involved with Rappaport, a former correspondent for “The Today Show,” for about a decade until they parted ways in 2010, court papers state.

Swift alleges that, while the couple was together, they struck up a deal in which Rappaport would offer up the land, Swift would pay to construct a home there and the two would hold pro rata stakes in the property.

“We’ll be partners. You’ll contribute the cash. I’ll contribute the land,” Rappaport said to Swift, according



Courtesy photo

The residence at the Last Buck Ranch in Suffolk County.

to a complaint he filed in Manhattan Supreme Court in 2011.

But after their break-up, Swift claims, Rappaport reneged on the deal and insisted that the millions that he dropped to construct the lavish log cabin was a gift.

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