

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., April 20 (UPD) — The FBI Friday identified a habitual criminal and escapee from the Missouri State Prison as the mysterious Eric Starvo Galt, object of an international manhunt in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Agents said James Earl Ray, 40, who fled prison 51 weeks ago by hiding in a bread truck, was identified through fingerprints after a 15-day check of the prints of more than 53,000 wanted criminals in FBI files.

The prints, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover said in Washington, proved "that Galt and Ray are identical."

Mr. Hoover's announcement came as sources close to the investigation into Dr. King's slaying theorized the name Eric Starvo Galt may have been a code name for the murder at Memphis, Tenn., April 4. The name appears in too many scattered places at about the same time under varying descriptions of its user to be one man, these sources said.

U. S. and Mexican officials were busy today to be hunting "unofficially" the Ray in Mexico, where rumors have spread of his presence in the past two weeks. An FBI alert has been issued in Southeast California, near Arizona and Mexico, for a man fitting Ray's description.

The FBI said Ray had assumed such aliases as Galt, Harvey Lowmeyer, John Willard, James McBride, James Walton, W. C. Herron and James O'Conner.

The man who checked into a rooming house from where Dr. King was shot by a sniper registered as John Willard.

Authorities said Ray, born in Alton, Ill., had a criminal record dating to 1949 and was serving a 20-year, habitual criminal sentence at Jefferson City, Mo., for armed robbery and automobile theft when he escaped April 23, 1967. Ray was working in the food service section of the Missouri State Prison and fled by hiding in a bread truck. A year earlier, he had tried to escape by hiding in the prison's ventilation system, but was discovered.

'EVASIVE TYPE'

Warden Harold Swenson said a 1966 mental examination showed Ray had no personality troubles or adjustment difficulties not common to confined men. "He was an evasive type person," said Swenson. "I don't think anybody either liked him or disliked him."

Probation records in Los Angeles, where he served a county jail term for burglary, showed that Ray, eldest of three sons, quit school in Ewing, Mo., in ninth grade.

"I didn't want to go anymore," he told a probation officer who described Ray as "a Catholic who did not attend church services."

He drifted for several years, once working as a 77-cents-an-hour laborer in a Hartford, Ill., shoe company, and joined the Army in 1946. He spent two years and four months in Germany as an infantryman and military policeman and received a general discharge in 1948 due to ineptness and a lack of adaptability for military service. He received a three months sentence in the Army for being drunk and breaking arrest.

LONG RECORD

He was unemployed until 1949, when he held a job briefly in a Chicago rubber company. He went to Los Angeles and his trouble with the law began. In addition to his jail term, he was convicted of armed robbery in Chicago in 1952 and forging U. S. postal orders in Missouri in 1955.

The FBI said Ray was 5 feet 10 and weighed about 163 to 174 pounds, with blue eyes and brown hair. He has a small scar in the center of his forehead and a scar on the palm of his right hand.

"Ray should be considered armed and extremely dangerous," the FBI said.



1952

1959



1967

1968

The different faces of James Ray.

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