

Hired-Killer Theory Gains In King Case

By PAUL VALENTINE

MEMPHIS—There is growing speculation among police detectives here that the assassin of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a disinterested professional killer—not a racist ideologue—who left an elaborate trail of phony clues to confuse his pursuers.

One notion is that the killer began his preparations six or eight months ago by dissolving his real identity and manufacturing a new personality known as "Eric Starvo Galt," 36, unemployed seaman."

Arming himself with phony credentials, he waited patiently in various cities for the right opportunity to fulfill his assignment.

Abbies' Story

In Atlanta, two cab drivers said they gave rides to the man identified as Galt the night after the assassination. from FBI sketches.

In Birmingham, where Galt once lived, Sheriff Mel Bailey said he believes the assassin originally may have planned to kill King in the Alabama city and that a conspiracy existed to murder the civil rights leader.

The right opportunity came April 4 in Memphis. King had arrived the day before. Both TV and the local newspapers had announced the motel and room number where King was staying.

The assassin rented a nearby room under the name "John Willard," fired the fatal shot and fled. Federal authorities here say they are satisfied Willard and Galt are the same person.

Had Money

Detectives say evidence that the killer was well-financed is reflected by his ability to purchase a "white Mustang" automobile and follow King for months without holding a job.

They look at the assassin as an incredible "cool" character who didn't seem to mind being obvious. Dressed neatly in a business suit and neck tie, he rented an \$8.50 a week room in a flop house, paying in advance with a new \$20 bill. He then left finger and hand prints in the bathroom and

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