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FBI Pictures In King Case Stir Dispute

By CY EGAN

An FBI photograph of Eric Starvo Galt, prime suspect in the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, is not a picture of the man who fled a Memphis rooming house after the murder, some witnesses maintained today.

"Unless he was wearing a wig, or had had a face lift or something, it's not the man I saw," said Charles C. Stevens, a resident of the rooming house from which the killer is believed to have shot King. "The hair is too full, and the face is too young."

The rooming house operator, Bessie Brewer, said she was uncertain whether the photograph was that of the man who checked into a room about three hours before the murder and left in a rush immediately after.

The mystery over whether the photograph actually depicted the killer deepened further when the man who sold the white Mustang later used in the getaway said it was not a likeness of the Eric Starvo Galt who had bought the car from him.

"It doesn't look anything like the man I sold the car to," the former owner of the Mustang, a Birmingham, Ala., resident, told the New York Post.

"I just didn't recognize him at all."

The man who asked that his identity be withheld, sold the car to an Eric Galt last Aug. 30. The vehicle, with Alabama license plates, was seen roaring off from the Memphis rooming house after the murder and was found abandoned the next day in Atlanta.

Peter Cherpes, owner of a Birmingham rooming house where Galt was staying when he bought the Mustang, said the FBI photo might be one of Galt, but added: "I don't think so."

Other witnesses who had known Galt during the six weeks he stayed at the rooming house also voiced doubts that the photo depicted him.

An Atlanta taxicab driver, [illegible] had identified a previous FBI sketch of the assassination suspect as that of a man he [illegible] two blocks [illegible] Atlanta's hippie district [illegible] night after the April 4 murder, said the photo did not resemble his passenger.

Meanwhile, it was learned that the FBI had obtained the photograph through the International School of Bartending, in Hollywood, Calif., where Galt graduated from a course last March 2.

Tomas Reyes Lau, director of the school, said Galt had declined to take a job offered to him after his graduation and explained that he had to leave on a trip to see his brother.

In a statement released with the photograph, the FBI said Galt had come to Birmingham to conspire against King "with an individual whom he alleged to be his brother" on or about March 30.

Lau quoted Galt as saying when he turned down the job offer:

"What good would it be to take a job for just two or three weeks? I'd better wait until I get back."

"I thought this was strange," said Lau, "because when Galt first applied to take the course he said he was desperate to get a job and to work. Then he suddenly turned the job down and left."

'A Nice Fellow'

Lau said he had last heard from Galt by telephone about a week after his graduation, where the photo obtained by the FBI had been taken.

"He was a nice fellow with a nice personality, and he was a pretty good pupil," said Lau. "He seemed very intelligent and had the ability to master the course. I never heard him say anything about Negroes."

Lau said Galt, who had a Southern accent, had paid a $220 registration fee for the course and gave as references two women and a man, all with Los Angeles addresses.

Rod Arvidson, 46, manager of the National Dance Studios, in Long Beach, Cal., said Galt had attended classes there from mid-December to last Feb. 12.

Arvidson said he was particularly struck by the large amounts of money Galt carried with him. "He seemed to be a Southern gentleman, neatly dressed."

Kathy Norton, 21, a dance instructor, said Galt told her he owned a restaurant or bar on the Mexican coast.

The FBI said Galt had clocked 19,000 miles in the Mustang on trips to Mexico, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Memphis, and Birmingham, where he purchased a 30.06 rifle on or about March 30. The weapon was found outside the Memphis rooming house after the murder.

A Mexican consular official in Memphis said that shortly before the assassination Galt had obtained a permit to visit that country.

WITNESSES SAY PHOTOGRAPH IS NOT KILLER
1. STEVENS (NO)
2. BREWER

(NO) Allen P. Bailey [illegible]

M. (DEAD) Peter Cherpes [illegible]

(NO) [illegible]

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