

CZZC

16 APR. 68

224 AES

King Slaying Bjt
420 2 takes total 670

By DON MCKEE

Associated Press Writer

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. AP - Deadend clues to a man who vanished without a trace apparently confronted FBI agents today in their investigation of the sniper slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

False leads multiplied in the hunt for Eric Starvo Galt, a mysterious quiet-talking man whose last known address was a Birmingham rooming house. His former landlord said Monday he had identified drawings shown by FBI agents as resembling Eric Galt.

"It's him," said Peter Cherpes, 72, who runs a two-story Southside boarding house where an Eric Galt lived for six weeks last fall.

Galt's abandoned white Mustang was impounded last Thursday by the FBI in Atlanta. It fit the description of a car seen leaving the scene after King was killed April 4 by a sniper firing from a rooming house in Memphis, Tenn.

Memphis witnesses described the suspected assassin, who registered as John Willard at a rooming house opposite King's motel, as about six feet and sandy-haired and "a clean, neat man."

No trace of Willard has apparently been found.

An FBI alert for Eric Starvo Galt in a white Mustang was issued in Florida last Thursday, but was canceled. However, the FBI has continued a search for Galt's whereabouts or clues to his past.

After Cherpes disclosed what his boarder said of his work and background, Associated Press inquiries turned up blanks.

Is there a real Eric Starvo Galt? The FBI was asked, but declined comment. Neither would the FBI say why Galt was wanted, though the Florida alert had sought only to spot the man, not arrest him. No warrant had been issued then.

The man known as Eric Galt had said he was employed at a Mississippi shipyard, but there was no record of him. He claimed he held Louisiana driver's license six years ago, but no record was found in the files.

There are mysteries within the mystery. Galt left the Birmingham boarding house last Oct. 7, saying he had a ship job in Mobile, Ala. but in December, he turned in the keys to his safety deposit box at the Birmingham Trust National Bank.

In addition, a duplicate driver's license for Eric Starvo Galt was mailed to the Birmingham address March 1, nearly seven months after he left, and it apparently vanished. The Birmingham post office indicated no forwarding address was left for Galt.

"The papers said he went down March 1 to ask for a duplicate license and he put the same address, which was wrong. He wasn't here," said Cherpes, who recalls Galt as "nice and friendly, quiet."

Cherpes described Galt as about 6 feet, 165-175 pounds with blue eyes and light brown hair, a neat, taciturn man. "If somebody talked to him, he would talk," the landlord recalled.

Galt had a room at the boarding house from Aug. 26 to Oct. 7, 1967, Cherpes said. The rent was \$22.50 a week. "He registered here that he came from Pascagoula, Miss." The boarder said he worked at Ingalls in shipbuilding jobs, Cherpes said. No record of his employment was found, the company office said Monday at Mobile.

MORE

JK22Caes April 16

AO11

BIRMINGHAM Take 2 King Slaying Bjt AO10: at Mobile.

"He was here on vacation and he said he was going to stay here about four months," the landlord said. The new boarder usually slept until about 11 a.m., had most of his meals at the rooming house and stayed to himself most of the time.

The second week after he arrived, Galt bought a car, the 1966 white Mustang, paying cash. He needed a driver's license.

"He asked me if I could drive him down to take the test," Cherpes said. "I did."

On the license application, Galt listed his occupation as "merchant seaman, unemployed." Maritime unions have no record of his name, nor was he drawing unemployment pay from the state.

About a week later, the landlord recalled, Galt got a package in the mail from Chicago: a box about two feet long, a foot wide and weighing 20 to 25 pounds. But Galt complained that it was the "wrong merchandise" and he was going to return it.

X Galt left saying he had found ship work in Mobile, Ala., but expected "a check from Chicago." A letter to Galt from Chicago arrived at the boarding house in February or March and was returned since there was no forwarding address, Cherpes said.

The landlord recalled that Galt had said he would send his new address. "But he never did send it."

JK224aes April 16