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WASHINGTON AP - The elusive Eric Starvo Galt, who is wanted for the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was identified by the FBI Friday as a 40-year-old drifter and ex-convict named James Earl Ray.

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The FBI said Galt's real identity was traced through "a systematic and exhaustive search of latent fingerprints" developed in the King case against the fingerprints of more than 53,000 persons for whom wanted notices are on file in the bureau's identification division.

Galt is only one of the names Ray has used in brushes with the law which began, according to the FBI dossier, when he was 21.

The FBI said he has used the names of James McBride, James Walton, W. O. Herron and James O'Connor.

He was described as about 5 feet 10, weighing 163 to 174 pounds, with blue eyes and brown hair and two scars: a small scar in the center of the forehead and another on the palm of his right hand.

At the time King was shot and killed by a sniper in Memphis, Tenn., April 4, Ray was being sought on a jail breaking charge.

The FBI said he escaped on April 23, 1967, from the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, where he was serving a 20-year sentence for armed robbery in St. Louis.

Ray, who is now being sought on a Tennessee murder charge in the King slaying, has an arrest record dating at least to 1949 when he served time in Los Angeles on a burglary charge.

This followed his discharge from the Army. The FBI said he served as an enlisted man from February 1946 to December 1948 when he received a general discharge for ineptness and lack of adaptability.

His Army record showed a three-month sentence at hard labor for being drunk and breaking arrest, the FBI said.

The bureau's dossier on Ray indicates he has been a drifter since he left school in the 10th grade at Alton, Ill.

He has worked as a baker, laborer and color matcher.

In 1952, according to the FBI, he was convicted in Chicago for armed robbery and served two years in Joliet and Pontiac, Ill. state prisons. In 1955, the FBI said, he was convicted of forging U.S. postal money orders in Missouri and was confined to Leavenworth penitentiary until 1958.

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The FBI said Ray was sent to the Missouri State Penitentiary on March 17, 1960, and spent some time in September 1966 in the maximum security ward at the state hospital in Fulton, Mo.

The FBI said Ray has listed his birth date as March 10, 1928, and his birthplace as Illinois.

The city clerk at Alton, Ill., Paul A. Price, said a James Earl Ray was born there on March 10, 1928, the son of a laborer.

The principal at Alton Senior High School said his records showed three James Rays attended the school during the period Ray would have been there, and he was trying to determine whether any of them was the man identified by the FBI as Galt.

The bureau did not say what set of fingerprints in the King case was matched with those of Ray, but it is presumed that prints were found on a rifle dropped near the scene of the killing as well as in the furnished room occupied by the sniper.

The FBI also has reported recovering a white Mustang automobile in Atlanta, Ga., believed to have been used by the killer.

In a warrant obtained by the FBI Wednesday, the fugitive was accused of conspiring with an individual "alleged to be his brother" to "injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate Martin Luther King Jr."

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