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BY DON MCKEE

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ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BIRMINGHAM, ALA. (AP)—FEDERAL AGENTS HAVE SCoured THIS CITY EXHIBITING SKETCHES OF A MAN'S FACE AND ASKING ABOUT THE NAME ERIC STARVO GALT, THE MYSTERIOUS OBJECT OF A HUNT LINKED TO THE PROBE OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S ASSASSINATION.

WHAT THE AGENTS HAVE LEARNED OR WHAT THEY WANT WITH GALT IS A TIGHTLY KEPT FBI SECRET. "NO COMMENT," IS ALL THE FBI WILL SAY. NOT EVEN THE LOCAL POLICE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO HELP IN BIRMINGHAM.

SOME KEY SOURCES HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THE FBI AGENTS NOT TO DISCUSS THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF GALT WITH ANYONE. THE FBI HAS COLLECTED THE RECORDS OF A ROOMING HOUSE, SEIZED A CAR WITH AN ALABAMA TAG SOLD TO GALT, AND ISSUED FOR FOUR HOURS AN ALERT FOR GALT IN FLORIDA.

WHO IS ERIC STARVO GALT?

THE NAME CAME UP LAST THURSDAY ON THE FLORIDA POLICE TELETYPE MESSAGE FROM THE FBI ASKING AUTHORITIES TO LOCATE GALT AND NOTIFY THE FBI. THE MESSAGE SAID GALT WAS DRIVING A 1966 WHITE MUSTANG HARDTOP WITH ALABAMA TAG 1-38993.

BUT ALMOST AT THE SAME TIME THE FLORIDA ALERT WENT OUT, FBI AGENTS IN ATLANTA WERE TAKING INTO CUSTODY A WHITE MUSTANG WITH ALABAMA TAG 1-38993, SOLD TO GALT.

THE GETAWAY CAR AFTER KING'S MURDER IN MEMPHIS WAS DESCRIBED BY WITNESSES AS A WHITE MUSTANG WITH RED AND WHITE LICENSE TAGS, LIKE ALABAMA'S.

ERIC STARVO GALT'S NAME APPEARED IN OFFICIAL STATE RECORDS WHEN HE BOUGHT A WHITE MUSTANG LAST AUG. 30 FROM A CAR SALESMAN, WILLIAM D. PAISLEY OF BIRMINGHAM. PAISLEY WOULD NOT TALK ABOUT IT.

SOURCES SAID THE MAN CALLED GALT PAID \$2,000 CASH FOR THE CAR.

WHEN HE APPLIED FOR A DRIVER'S LICENSE, GALT PUT DOWN "MERCHANT SEAMAN, UNEMPLOYED." THE APPLICATION GAVE HIS BIRTHDATE AS JULY 20, 1931, AND HIS DESCRIPTION AS 5-11, 175 POUNDS, BLUE EYES AND BROWN HAIR --THE SAME GENERAL DESCRIPTION AS A MAN SEEN FLEEING A MEMPHIS ROOMING HOUSE AFTER THE SLAYING.

PIECING BITS OF INFORMATION TOGETHER--AND ASSESSING THE HUGE GAPS, THE PHANTOM-LIKE QUALITY OF THE MAN--RESULTS IN A SKETCHY PICTURE OF A NEATLY DRESSED MAN WHOSE APPARENT ABSENCE OF ANY KIND OF OFFICIAL RECORDS SEEMS STRANGE.

THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION IN THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS THAT A FALSE TRAIL WAS LAID BY THE KILLER OR KILLERS.

BUT WHAT OF ERIC STARVO GALT?

"MY MEMORY OF HIM IS SO DIM," SAID CHARLES JACK DAVIS, 26, A TILE COMPANY EMPLOYEE WHO HAS A SMALL SECOND FLOOR ROOM IN THE SOUTHSIDE BOARDING HOUSE WHERE GALT LIVED AT SOME TIME IN THE PAST YEAR.

"I DON'T GUESS THERE'S ANY SUCH THING AS A TYPICAL PERSON," THE BLACK-HAIRED, SMALL-BUILT DAVIS WENT ON. THE BEST HE COULD RECALL WAS THAT GALT'S GENERAL DESCRIPTION WAS BROWN HAIR AND BLUE EYES, ABOUT 5-11.

ANOTHER BOARDER, 29-YEAR-OLD HILL HARDY, WHO WORKS THE 3 P.M. TO 11:30 SHIFT AT A PAPER PLANT, SAID HE HAD LIVED AT THE STUCCO HOUSE SINCE IT OPENED LAST SEPTEMBER AS HE REMEMBERED IT. BUT HE DIDN'T REMEMBER EVER SEEING GALT.

"I MIGHT HAVE SEEN HIM IN THE DAYTIME," SAID HARDY.

OTHER BOARDERS WERE UNABLE TO REMEMBER MUCH IF ANYTHING AT ALL WHO HAD OCCUPIED ROOM 14 ON THE GROUND FLOOR BUT MIGHT HAVE BEEN GONE FOR WEEKS OR MONTHS.

OWNER-MANAGER PETER CHERPES, WHO TALKS WITH A MEDITERRANEAN ACCENT,

HAS TURNED HIS RECORDS OVER TO THE FBI AND REFUSES POLITELY TO TALK ABOUT GALT. HE WOULD NOT EVEN SAY HOW MUCH RENT GALT PAID, WHETHER IT WAS PAID LATELY OR IF GALT STILL HAD THE ROOM.

ANOTHER BOARDER SAID A ROOM AND TWO MEALS A DAY COST \$22 A WEEK.

CHERPES PROBABLY KNEW GALT BETTER THAN ANY OTHER PERSON WHO HAS BEEN FOUND IN BIRMINGHAM. CHERPES ACCOMPANIED GALT FOR HIS DRIVER'S LICENSE EXAMINATION LAST SEPT. 6, RECORDS SHOW. ONLY LAST MARCH 1, A DUPLICATE DRIVER'S LICENSE WAS MAILED ON REQUEST TO ERIC STARVO GALT AT THE BOARDING HOUSE, 2608 HIGHLAND AVE.

OTHERWISE, GALT SEEMED TO BE ALMOST A PHANTOM.

AT DRY CLEANERS, SERVICE STATIONS, APARTMENT HOUSES AND OTHER PLACES IN THE SOUTHSIDE AREA OF THE BOARDING HOUSE, NO ONE CONTACTED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT GALT.

"THE FBI HAS ALREADY CHECKED OUR RECORDS," SAID A WOMAN CASHIER AT A CLEANERS ON 26TH STREET. "I'VE BEEN HERE TWO YEARS AND WE HAVE HAD NO GALT AS A CUSTOMER."

THE MAN CALLED GALT SAID HE WAS A SEAMAN, OUT OF WORK, BUT THE MARITIME UNION HAS NO RECORD OF HIS NAME. HE ESTABLISHED NO CREDIT IN BIRMINGHAM, SO FAR AS IS KNOWN, AND MAINTAINED ONLY A SAFE DEPOSIT BOX AT A LOCAL BANK--NO CHECKING OR SAVINGS ACCOUNT.

A CHECK OF UNEMPLOYMENT PAYMENT RECORDS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS HERE DISCLOSED NO PAYMENTS TO ERIC STARVO GALT, ACCORDING TO AN EMPLOYEE--MRS. C. L. GAULT, WHO SAID PEOPLE NOW LOOK A LITTLE SURPRISED WHEN THEY HEAR HER NAME, ALTHOUGH IT IS SPELLED DIFFERENTLY FROM THAT OF THE HUNTED MAN.

MRS. GAULT SAID SHE KNEW NOTHING OF ERIC GALT. SHE RECALLED THAT AN FBI AGENT CAME TO THE OFFICE ABOUT FIVE DAYS AGO ASKING FOR A CHECK OF ERIC STARVO GALT AND MADE A REMARK THAT THE "SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE WOULD NOT RECHECK FOR HIS (GALT'S) SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER."

WHAT THIS MEANT WAS UNCLEAR, BUT MRS. GAULT SAID IT WOULD BE EASIER TO TRACK DOWN EMPLOYERS WITH THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE MAN BEING SOUGHT.

THE FBI WOULD NOT COMMENT.
SR. SUPERVISOR FLOYD E. ROBERTSON

9. SUPERVISOR FLOYD E. ROBERTSON SR.

SUPERVISOR FLOYD E. ROBERTSON SR., MRS. GAULT'S SUPERIOR, CONFIRMED THE FILES WERE CHECKED. "I CHECKED THE FILES MYSELF FOR THE NAME." HE SAID SAIV58, 484.8, 88-- (89'085-) 18)3' 2343 :83CKED AND THEY SHOW NO ERIC STARVO GALT.

THERE IS ONE GALT LISTED IN THE CITY TELEPHONE DIRECTORY: THE REV. RALPH M. GALT, A MINISTER OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND INSTRUCTOR AT MILES COLLEGE, A PREDOMINANTLY NEGRO PRIVATE SCHOOL IN BIRMINGHAM.

"WE DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT THIS PERSON," SAID MRS. RALPH M. GALT. "WE HAVE CHECKED ALL THE RELATIVES WE CAN THINK OF. WE'VE CHECKED PICTURE AND THIS MAN'S DESCRIPTION DOESN'T RING A BELL."

SHE SAID HER HUSBAND'S FAMILY CAME FROM IOWA WHERE THE NAME GALT WAS NOT SO UNCOMMON. BUT SHE SAID THE NAMES ERIC AND STARVO WERE UNUSUAL.

"WE DON'T KNOW ANYBODY IN OUR FAMILY BY THAT NAME," SHE SAID.

MRS. RALPH GALT WAS WONDERING ALOUD OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF A FICTITIOUS NAME. THERE WERE OTHERS WHO SPECULATED ALONG THAT LINE.

A CHARACTER IN A JAMES BOND NOVEL, "ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE," HAS FIRST AND MIDDLE NAMES OF SOME POSSIBLE SIMILARITY: ERNST STAVRO BLOFELD.

AND AYN RAND IN HER BOOK TITLE, "ATLAS SHRUGGED," ASKS A STRANGE QUESTION: "WHO IS JOHN GALT?" THIS QUESTION, WHICH WAS LEFT UNANSWERED FOR A LONG TIME IN THE BOOK, IS LIKE THAT BEING ASKED IN BIRMINGHAM:

"WHO, AND WHERE, IS ERIC STARVO GALT?"

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