

Mysterious Secrecy On Murder Suspect

Doubt on Existence Of 'Galt'

Times-Post Service

Birmingham, Ala.

More than 24 hours after the name Eric Starvo Galt first figured publicly in the investigation of the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King, it still is unclear whether a man of that name is a suspect—or even exists.

FBI agents, after inadvertently disclosing Thursday they were seeking a man who once lived here under that name, declined to comment on any aspect of the case yesterday.

So tight was the secrecy that the FBI drew around its investigation, Birmingham residents once acquainted with Galt were instructed by agents to keep silent.

But it became apparent that agents were on Galt's track as early as last week—several days before a white Mustang registered to him was impounded Thursday in Atlanta.

The car found in Atlanta matches the description of a dirty white Mustang witnesses said they saw speed away from the Memphis murder scene after Dr. King was shot April 4.

STATEMENT

Attorney General Ramsey Clark did nothing to relieve the mystery when he issued a statement in Washington yesterday. It duplicated almost verbatim the hopeful remarks he made in Memphis the day after the assassination and his declaration that "the FBI is devoting every possible resource to this investigation."

Clark refused to answer newsmen's questions personally. Press aides said the statement was his response to inquiries about the progress of the investigation.

Another source close to the investigation, however, said

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it was his opinion that the FBI now is stalking down "a cold trail."

SPECULATION

This could explain the fierce FBI secrecy on the case. But it also gave rise to speculation that no such man as Eric Starvo Galt ever really existed.

Some theorists held that a would-be-assassin began fashioning a new identity either late last summer or early last fall to cover his tracks once he had completed his mission.

The Mustang registered to Galt was purchased from a Birmingham auto dealer last August and is a 1966 model. The dealer, William Paisley, upon FBI instructions, would not comment.

A man named Galt got his Alabama driver's license here September 6, and was accompanied to the test by the landlord of the rooming house listed on the Mustang's registration.

DUPLICATE

Galt filed for a duplicate license March 1 and gave the rooming house at 2608 Highland avenue here as his address, indicating he had lived there as late as that date.

However, one resident who did comment said he had not seen the man answering Galt's description in the dwelling for three months.

It was learned yesterday that long before the Mustang was found FBI agents had checked with both the Maritime Union and Seafarers International Union in Mobile, asking about an Eric Galt.

In obtaining his driver's license, the man named Galt had given his occupation as an unemployed seaman.

Agents also checked with one of the largest fishing firms in the Alabama Gulf area and in Coast Guard files in Washington before the Mustang was found, it was learned.

The name of Eric Galt might never have come to public attention if newsmen in Atlanta had not caught a glimpse of the license number as the Mustang was being towed away Thursday by the FBI.

The license, Alabama 1-38993, is the same number as that cited in an FBI bulletin issued Thursday in Miami, an alert which sought help in finding Galt.

The bulletin said he was last seen driving a white Mustang with that number.

The Mustang registered to Galt was first reported seen in Atlanta on the morning of April 5.

The distance from Memphis to Atlanta is about 400 miles. Taking into account the one-hour loss because of the time zone change, a driver, depending on his speed, could have left Memphis after the slaying and arrived in Atlanta as early as 3 a.m. the next day.

LOCATION

The automobile was found in the parking lot of the Capitol Homes Development, a garden-type project designed for low-income families, about five blocks from the state capitol.

The Rev. Ike Powell notified police about the car Thursday, after receiving a call from a member of his Inner City Methodist Church.

When city detectives arrived, said the Rev. Mr. Powell, they "didn't appear too excited." But he said FBI agents arrived later and soon "were all over the place."

Two Mexican "Turista" decals were on the back and side windows.