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By DON MCKEE

Associated Press Writer

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. AP - A boarding house owner disclosed Monday he told FBI agents investigating the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that drawings of a man they were hunting closely resembled a roomer named Eric Galt.

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"That's the man. The resemblance is close enough, I'm sure," said Peter Cherpes, 72, owner of the South Side boarding house where he said an Eric Galt lived for six weeks last fall, then dropped from sight.

Developments Monday brought a deepening mystery to the background of the man called Eric Galt. He had said he was employed at a Mississippi shipyard, but there was no record of his name on the employe list.

In Louisiana, where Galt had said he held a driver's license, there was no such record on state files. It was much the same story with other efforts to trace Galt.

Cherpes said he identified FBI drawings very similar to one composed by a newspaper artist from descriptions of a man seen fleeing the assassination scene April 4 in Memphis, Tenn. The FBI declined comment.

But, within a week after King's slaying, the FBI was hunting a man identified as Eric Starvo Galt, whose last known address was the Birmingham boarding house. The hunt had spread into several states.

An FBI "locate and notify" alert for Galt was put out last Thursday over the Florida police network, but was withdrawn four hours later as erroneous. At the same time, FBI agents impounded in Atlanta a white Ford Mustang with an Alabama tag issued to Eric Starvo Galt.

The abandoned Mustang matched the description of a suspected getaway car in Memphis.

Cherpes said he first was told not to talk about Galt. He said he asked the FBI two days ago if he could discuss the matter and was told, "We suggest you don't, but we can't keep you from it."

Cherpes said in an interview the man known as Eric Starvo Galt had a room at the Highland Avenue boarding house from Aug. 26 to Oct. 7, 1967. "He registered here that he came from Pascagoula, Miss.," Cherpes said.

The boarder was "nice and friendly, quiet," said Cherpes. He described Galt as about 6 feet tall, 165-175 pounds, with blue eyes and light brown hair, a neat dresser and a man who kept mostly to himself.

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Galt said he was employed by a shipbuilding firm, Cherpes stated, and thought it was "Ingalls iron works." Ingalls shipbuilding is at Pascagoula. A check by The Associated Press, trailing the FBI, produced no record of an employe named Eric Galt.

About a week after renting a room, Galt asked his landlord to help in getting an Alabama driver's license. "He had bought a car. He asked me if I could drive him down to take the test," Cherpes said.

Cherpes said he did so. That was Sept. 6, 1967, soon after Eric Galt had purchased a white Mustang from a Birmingham car salesman. The driver's license application described Galt as 5 feet 11, 175 pounds, blue eyes and brown hair. His birthdate was July 20, 1931. The application also claimed Galt had held a 1962 Louisiana license, but no record of this was found.

Within another week, Cherpes said, a package for Galt arrived from Chicago. It was a cardboard box about 2 feet long and 1 foot wide. But Galt said, "they sent me the wrong merchandise; I'm sending it back."

Cherpes said his boarder left in early August^{*} saying he had a job "in the ships" at Mobile, Ala.

* SEE ABOVE

About five months later, in February or March, a letter for Galt from Chicago arrived, Cherpes said, but was returned because there was no forwarding address.

The Birmingham post office could give no forwarding address for Eric Starvo Galt.

But a duplicate driver's license in that name was mailed to the boarding house address last March - nearly seven months after Galt had gone. State records in Montgomery showed the license was mailed upon request made in person or by telephone and was not returned through the mail.

Little trace of Galt has been found otherwise, except for a safety deposit box he rented at Birmingham Trust National Bank. He went to the bank to open the box in August and again to turn in the keys in December - more than a month after he left Cherpes' place.

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