

REGARDING ALABAMA VETERAN LEMUEL "PETE" PETERSON:

His real name was Lemuel, but, like all the Peterson boys, he wound up with the nickname "Pete". Though farm life could be tough, Pete loved the outdoors and never missed the chance to hunt or fish or play ball. One of his real passions was playing basketball with his high school team in Tumbleton, Alabama. That all changed when Pete enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941. He was assigned to be a tail gunner for a B29 which had been christened "The Ghastly Goose." The crew of the Goose was a tight knit team who became known as a highly effective force in the missions they flew over Japan. But, in January of 1945, when anti-aircraft fire struck her fuel tanks, the Goose was forced to crash land in the Pacific.

All 12 members of the crew survived and climbed aboard the plane, which they knew could float for up to 48 hours. Shortly before dusk they spotted another plane which signaled to them that a rescue would be sent the next morning. It was the last time anyone ever saw Pete Peterson and the crew of the Ghastly Goose. When rescuers came the next morning, they had vanished. To this day no one knows what happened to them.

In keeping with MIA policy at the time, Pete and all the others were declared dead a year and one day later. They say that, even though they never made it home, the bombing missions Pete and his crew flew over Japan were instrumental in the war effort. And that's kind of fitting, because Pete Peterson of Tumbleton, Alabama, always was a good guy to have on your team.