



SHOT DOWN OVER ITALY

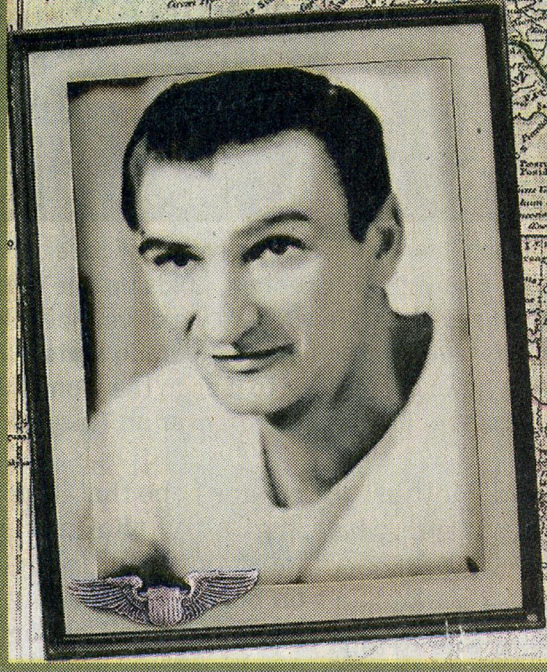


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For 66 years
the story
of how an
Apple Valley
man eluded
Nazis during
World War II
remained a
secret. Now his
story is told ...

BY HOLLY LA PAT
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS

Walter Brickner lived in Apple Valley for more than 25 years, but few people knew him well.

None of them knew his secret.

Brickner was the co-pilot of a B-25 Mitchell bomber that was shot down over Italy in World War II. He evaded the enemy for a month and a half, but after his rescue, he signed an agreement never to talk about it. So when Brickner died in 2002, the tale of his escape and evasion went to his grave with him.

Author John Lanza unearthed Brickner's secret after discovering his own uncle had been in the same crash. Their story is told in Lanza's book, "Shot Down Over Italy," scheduled for publication in June, just after the anniversary of the May 26, 1944, crash.

The B-25 was on a mission to bomb a bridge south of Florence, Italy, when it was hit by enemy flak, disabling the engine.

"When the engine goes out, there's a risk that it will go into a dive and spin. If it does,

