



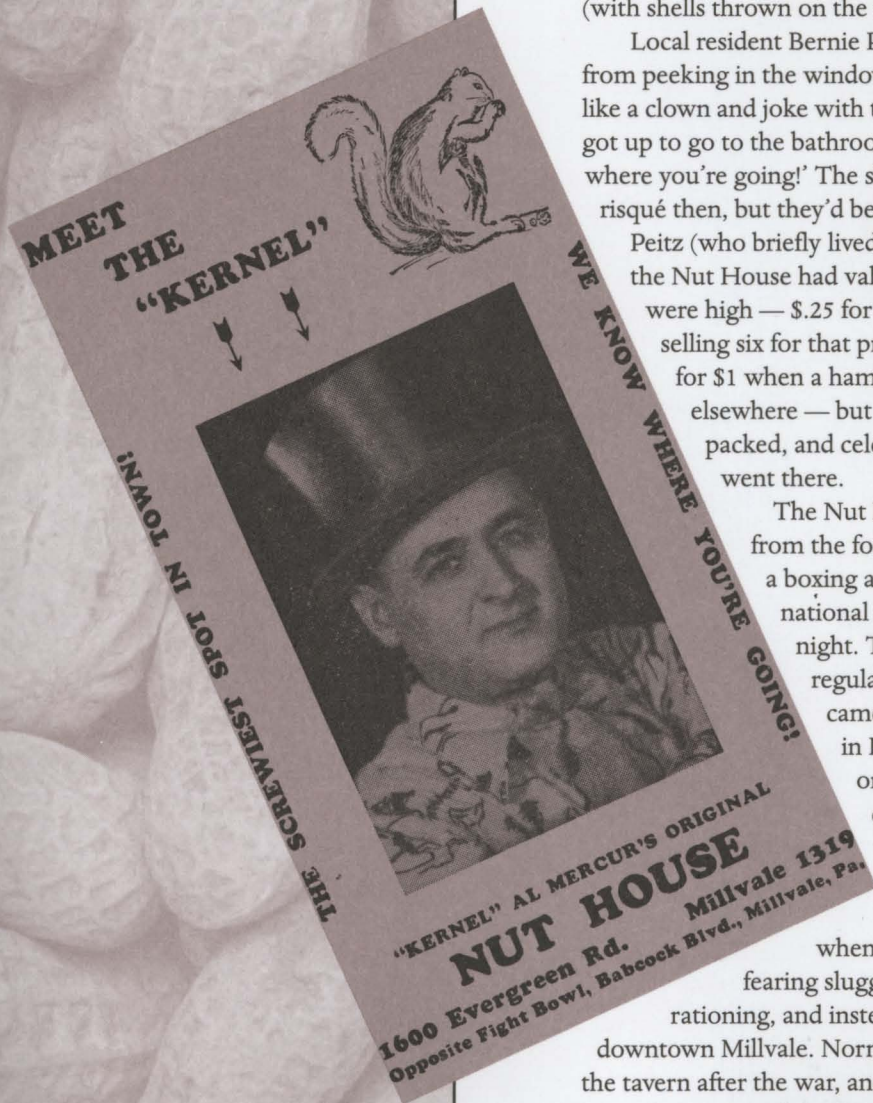
THE NUT HOUSE was once the hoppin'est place in Millvale. Beginning in the 1930s, "Kernel" Al Mercur operated a tavern in the borough near Pittsburgh that was named for both his crazy floor shows and the big bowls of peanuts on every table (with shells thrown on the floor).

Local resident Bernie Peitz recalls being chased from peeking in the windows: "Mercur would dress like a clown and joke with the audience. If someone got up to go to the bathroom, he'd yell, 'We know where you're going!' The shows were considered risqué then, but they'd be G-rated today."

Peitz (who briefly lived and bartended there) says the Nut House had valet parking and that prices were high — \$.25 for a Coke when stores were selling six for that price, or a ham sandwich for \$1 when a hamburger was a nickel elsewhere — but the place was always packed, and celebrities in the area always went there.

The Nut House was across the road from the former Hickey Park, where a boxing arena attracted local and national talent every Monday night. The best-remembered regular is Fritzie Zivic, who came from a family of fighters in Lawrenceville. Zivic went on to win the welterweight crown at Madison Square Garden in 1940.

Peitz says Mercur closed the Nut House when World War II broke out, fearing sluggish times due to gas rationing, and instead opened a piano bar in downtown Millvale. Norm Cummings reopened the tavern after the war, and ran it for another 20 years. Later named the Brown Jug and now the Hickey Park Inn, it recently caught fire but is being remodeled. Hickey Park was partly replaced by a Shop 'N Save. — *Text by Brian Butko, who also owns the postcard.* ⚙





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