Generations of Jewish children will reach adulthood never knowing the story of The Uncle. His relationship to the family was never quite explicit. In the house where he lived, there was a neat cubed bedroom that reminded you of "yesterday" many years ago, and the furnishings and placement of things that were in it and belonged to The Uncle never changed, nor were they ever moved to other places in the room.

If there was a family gathering it was, of course, understood that the Uncle would be there. During the festivities, it was fascinating to watch him tap his cane to the rhythm of the traditional dances. The case, if leaned sideways next to his favorite chair, was a reminder to the child who disobeyed orders, and the neighbor downstairs knew silence was requested when it was tapped on the bathroom radiator.

It was The Uncle who kept tradition alive during holiday gatherings, as everything was done to receive his approval. And at the gathering at the dinner, the cane was a part of it. Perched on the corner of the table, when The Uncle reached for it, that was the signal for the table to be cleared.

Generation Passes
Who was The Uncle? Sometimes he was a house uncle, but more often than not, he was an elderly member of a family and had been taken in to live—for a while—until things settled or until he could contact his close relatives. As a matter of fact, sometimes things didn't quite settle in that generation at all, and grand-nephews grew to know him.

Baby sitters not having come into fashion, way back when, it was The Uncle(s) who took pride in this job. Theatre owners get to know The Uncle as the kids ran up to him after the afternoon movie. The children would run and hult to a skid in front of him as the youngest of the group would reach for a gleaned hand...and the walk home would begin.

Time of Advice
The walk home was the time of philosophical advice and the children knew they had a willing ear for their problems and often times the controversy between child and parents was resolved by The Uncle, who would present both sides of the story in such a manner that all was peace and quiet.

However, if The Uncle got himself in Dutch, it was a mad scramble to be the loudest in proclaiming his innocence.