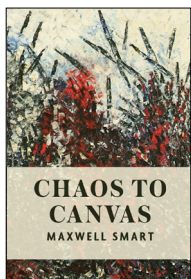


MEET MAXWELL



BIOGRAPHY:

Maxwell Smart was born under the name Oziac Fromm in 1930 in a small town in Poland (now Ukraine) called Buczacz. His father, Lieb, owned a clothing store, and his mother, Faige, came from a prominent family. Maxwell, his parents and his little sister, Zonia, lived a comfortable middle-class life and kept Jewish traditions. Growing up in Poland, Maxwell played with both Jews and Christians in his town. During the German invasion of eastern Poland in the summer of 1941, Maxwell's family stayed in Buczacz rather than fleeing eastward with the departing Soviet army. In August 1941, Maxwell's father was part of a group of Jewish men who were shot by the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators and buried in a mass grave at Fedor Hill. Afterwards, Maxwell's family was crowded into a Jewish area in the town (which later became a ghetto) and they struggled to subsist. During a deportation in November 1942, Maxwell's mother begged him to save himself. He managed to escape, and his aunt found him a hiding place with a poor Polish farmer named Jasko, and his family. Eventually it became too dangerous for Maxwell to live with them, so he constructed shelters in the nearby forest and shared them with other young Jews that he met. For one and a half years, Maxwell survived the loneliness, cold and bands of Ukrainian nationalists who searched the woods for Jews in hiding. After liberation, he travelled around Europe for several years, then immigrated to Canada with a group of orphans in 1948 and changed his name to Maxwell Smart. Many years later, he became a successful painter, and he now owns an art gallery in Montreal.



Maxwell Smart is a Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Canada after the war and settled in Montreal. You can learn about his experiences by reading his memoir, *Chaos to Canvas*, or on the digital resource Re:Collection.

Below is some background that will help you understand Maxwell's story.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Poland is a country in Central Europe, located between Germany and Russia, that had a large Jewish population before World War II. Jews faced **antisemitism** and **discrimination** in Poland, but many also participated in Polish culture and society. **World War II** began with the **German invasion of Poland in September 1939** and the occupation of western Poland. Soon afterwards, Germany's then ally, the **Soviet Union**, occupied the eastern part of Poland. The town of Buczacz, which had a large Jewish population, was part of the Soviet-occupied zone until the summer of 1941, when the German army attacked the Soviet Union and occupied eastern Poland. In their first anti-Jewish action, the **Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators** rounded up several hundred Jewish men, including community leaders, and shot many of them at Fedor Hill on August 27, 1941, burying their bodies in a mass grave. The German occupiers continued to persecute Polish Jews, including by forcing them into **ghettos** – small crowded areas with poor living conditions that were guarded by Germans. In 1942, Polish Jews began to be deported to **Nazi camps** and killing centres that were located in Poland. For Jews in Poland, survival was almost impossible. Those who managed to survive did so by hiding or using **false identity papers**, hoping they could stay undetected until the war ended. Poles who helped Jews did so at a great risk because they would likely be killed if the Germans or their collaborators found out. In general, the Ukrainian population in this part of Poland welcomed the invading German army, and many became willing collaborators with the Nazis in carrying out the Holocaust. Liberation by the Soviet army came to Buczacz in **July 1944**. Approximately **3,000,000 Polish Jews** were killed in the Holocaust, including Maxwell's parents, sister and dozens of his extended family members.

“Was I going crazy? Or was I already crazy? The only thing I knew was that there was no one around to love me and I had nobody to love. There was no one to care for me and to miss me, to be concerned about whether I lived or died.”

MAXWELL SMART