

Tolbert Chism: —didn't vote was that there was a poll tax that you had to pay. And hey, what am I going to do? Let my children go without shoes or something that they need, because money is so hard to get to, I mean so hard to have and all. Am I going to not pay my poll tax and support my family with the money that I have coming in? You see, back there during that time, money was hard. Now, let me see. 19 and 41 is when I enlisted in the United States Army. The year just before that I had attended this Fargo Agricultural School and was promoted from the 9th to the 10th grade. And I went—

Speaker 2: How are you doing?

Tolbert Chism: How you doing? I went and—

Speaker 5: Let me see what your nameplate is.

Paul Ortiz: I'll put it on pause.

Paul Ortiz: [INTERRUPTION 00:01:23]

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Chism, now after you—I guess I should ask when you were born?

Tolbert Chism: February the 14th, 1923. Valentine's Day, if you please, as you just heard.

Paul Ortiz: Okay. And Mr. Chism, what year did you first attend—What was the first year you attended here at the school?

Tolbert Chism: The first year I attended here at the Fargo Agricultural School, it was around about 19 and 37. The latter part of 1937 is when I started at Fargo Agricultural School. And I attended here until 19 and 41 and that's when, in the year of 1941, I failed to return and went and got permission from a parent and volunteered for the United States Army.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Chism, when you came here, did you work your way through the school?

Tolbert Chism: Well, yes. The way it was, I worked part of it and my parent paid part of it. Part of it, at that time I had to pay—My parents paid \$7 a month and the other \$7, it was \$14 a month, and the other \$7, that half a day that I worked paid for that.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Chism, what are your fondest memories of going to school here in Fargo, your best memories?

Tolbert Chism: The fondest memories I had of Fargo is when I actually graduated from the 12th grade here

at Fargo Agricultural School. Yes.

Speaker 6: How do you do, sir?

Paul Ortiz: How do you do?

Tolbert Chism: Magnificent. How are you?

Speaker 6: Oh, doing all right. How is everybody?

Paul Ortiz: All right. Good. Good morning.

Speaker 6: Alex Green.

Tolbert Chism: All right.

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Chism, when we started, you began telling me about an experience you had in the Army.

Tolbert Chism: Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: About wanting to make people in the Army know that there were other Black generals other than General Benjamin Davis.

Tolbert Chism: Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Now, what was the outcome of that story? What happened?

Tolbert Chism: What was the outcome of that story?

Tolbert Chism: I tell you, General Patton, Blood and Guts, is a fellow that I love the green yard dirt he sleeps in today.

Tolbert Chism: He told them, of course they didn't tell me, but my company commander told me, he was kind of on my side about it too, that Patton said that he just wished Blackjack wasn't retired and was still in the army. Said, "He would show them all something." You see, Blackjack was the general that commanded the Buffalo Soldiers. They called him something, I don't know what. They had a nickname. They called him Blackjack because he always liked to command Black soldiers. That's where they got the name Blackjack from. And he said that if all of the Whites was—

Tolbert Chism: No, he said that if the Blacks were educated as well as the Whites were, that he would always rather have Blacks fighting for him than Whites. He said now, said, "Look like they really had the instinct for fighting." And he had something to do with the Buffalo Soldiers many years ago and all of that out in the

Northwest.

Paul Ortiz: So you didn't end up getting—

Tolbert Chism: No. Didn't end up—After he kind of talked them all out of it and told them what he knew about it and all, and said the words that he did say on my behalf, they just dropped it all.

Paul Ortiz: And what outfit were you with, Mr. Chism?

Tolbert Chism: Well, I was in what they call the Infantry School Service Battalion, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Paul Ortiz: And General Patton kind of interceded?

Tolbert Chism: Yeah. He was over the Second Armored Division out at—What was that? Sand Hill. Sand Hill, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Paul Ortiz: And so you were involved in kind of the early armor?

Tolbert Chism: Yeah, that's right. Matter of fact, he tried to go through the channels and to get me to be his aide. Yeah, I don't know why, but he did try to go through all the red tape and get this Colored fellow as his aide. I don't know why he wanted me to be his aide and all of that. Yeah.