

The following transcript of
Sebastiano “Sam” Farelli’s interview
on

Memories and Music

(broadcast April 5, 1981)

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: Sam Farelli, 1907 - TAPE NO; 122
POSITION: Retired railway employee TRANS.: Raymonde Lafortune
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INTERVIEWER: Gary Peck SUMMER CANADA PROJECT

THEME: Sam Farelli, an Italian immigrant, recalls railroading in Sudbury and Capreol from his employment with the Canadian National and the Ontario Northland, beginning in the year 1923.

G.P. Our guest today on Memories & Music is Mr. Sam Farelli. Born in Italy, Mr. Farelli worked with the Canadian National for approximately forty years and a few months with the Ontario Northland and our topic today will be railroading in the Sudbury district. However, before we begin our interview portion of the program, I would like to turn the program back to the music host.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Sam Farelli is our guest today on Memories & Music and welcome to the program Mr. Farelli. When did you come over to Canada? I understand you indicated ^{that} you were born in Italy in 1907, I think it was.

S.F. That's right.

G.P. And when did you come over to Canada?

S.F. In 1923.

G.P. '23. And what was it like travelling from Europe to Canada back in the '20s. You . . .

S.F. Well to tell you the truth, I never would like to go back on account of the I got so sea-sick on the boat.

G.P. Sea-sick?

S.F. Yeah . . .

G.P. I think that was a common occurrence *for many*.

S.F. Oh boy, oh boy, when I come to New York I see the Liberty,

she go^{gonna go} hide, gonna go back in the water.

G.P. When you saw the Statue of Liberty, you were, you felt that you were home at last and that was it. So you've never travelled back on boat? Never travelled back?

S.F. No, no.

G.P. No.

S.F. I went once at St.-John, New Brunswick three hours across the bay there.

G.P. Oh, yes.

S.F. And boy . . .

G.P. That was too much even.

S.F. Oh yeah.

G.P. Why did you come to Canada?

S.F. Well . . .

G.P. Was it . . .

S.F. ^{See?} Where I come from it's a farmer country, eh?

G.P. You came from the center of Italy, I think you're saying, aren't you?

S.F. Yeah, the center of Italy. No, but I mean the hometown where I come from . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. We all live on the farm, eh?

G.P. Right.

S.F. And you know sometime, there some day, some year, you, well you're lucky to farm you know nice crop. But next year well you know . . .

G.P. So it's fairly risky work?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. You came to Canada because you viewed it as a land of opportunity?

S.F. Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

G.P. Did you, you were twenty-three years old at the, no,
no, no . . .

S.F. Sixteen . . .

G.P. You, you were in your teens. Did you come by yourself?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. On your own?

S.F. That's right. Yeah.

G.P. That must have been quite a decision for a teenager I
should think at that time.

S.F. Yeah, but of course *you had an uncle* *Jim* at North-Bay,
he, he's the one he signed the paper for me.

G.P. I see, so you, you had some . . .

S.F. Otherwise, otherwise . . .

G.P. You had some assistance there.

S.F. Yeah, otherwise you couldn't come, eh?

G.P. No.

S.F. (*He*) in North-Bay.

G.P. How long *did* it take you to travel?

S.F. Well, it take me eight days in a boat and then they hold
me. They hold five days in New York before the, we come
off the boat. And once we come off the boat, I had to stay
another seven days in the hospital there; *and I account of*
my eye, eh? There little () went in one of my eye, and
it getting quite red; and the eye specialist said: "You gotta
wait until your eyes clear up." So . . .

G.P. So you were checked by the doctors?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. Why were you held five days, before you could disembark?

S.F. Because there had another three boat ahead of us and you
know there's a doctor only work so many hours, *eh?* And
then you gotta wait till *it's at . . .*

G.P. These were boats full of people coming over to North Ame-
rica?

S.F. That's right, That's right. That's right. Yeah.
I came over to (2).'

G.P. What would it have cost for passage at that time?
Do you recall?

S.F. I gotta think, it was I don't know about three, three,
four thousand lire I think and at that time that was
a lot of money. Because you got to work you know. You
work you're eight hours, more than eight hours, you only
get you know five lire; and three mules that's all.

G.P. Eight hours for how many? Five . . .

S.F. Five lire, would be one dollar, eh?

G.P. One dollar and . . .

S.F. And three meals.

G.P. And three meals. So that would take quite a while cer-
tainly. Very definitely. So you came, you made your
way from Montreal, I'm sorry from New York City rather . . .

S.F. To Toronto . . .

G.P. To Toronto.

S.F. And then Toronto to North-Bay.

G.P. Came up to North-Bay.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. And stayed at North-Bay for a short while, I assume.

S.F. Yeah, short while, yeah.

G.P. What prompted you to come to Capreol?

S.F. Well ~~there~~ the job eh? I came to, as I say, to work for
the C.N.R. I went to ~~Ostrum~~ ^{there} eh?

G.P. Alright. Did you hear about the job in North-Bay? Did
you hear that the C.N. was hiring?

S.F. Well, no I had one of my cousin, he was a foreman up there,
eh?

G.P. He was a foreman on the C.N.R..

S.F. So he wrote, so he wrote me a letter to come up there, he
got a job for me. Yeah.

G.P. So you were in your teens at that time, when you started with the C.N.R., and you didn't start off in Capreol but you started north on the line . . .

S.F. Yeah, west of Capreol . . .

G.P. The community . . . west of Capreol. Ostrum was it the . . .

S.F. Ostrum, yeah that's a sixty-nine mile west of Capreol.

G.P. Sixty-nine miles and what was your job at that time?

S.F. Section man . . .

G.P. You were . . .

S.F. I worked on the track ~~of~~ ([?]), that's all.

G.P. Worked on the track.

S.F. ~~On~~ the ^{kind of} track, =yeah.

G.P. And what was that Ostrum?

S.F. Just a section house and . . .

G.P. The section . . .

S.F. ~~The~~ foreman and three men that's all.

G.P. ~~The~~ foreman and ~~the~~ three men and a section.

S.F. And one dog.

G.P. And one dog. And lots of isolation at times.

S.F. Oh, yeah. Lots of moose.

G.P. Lots of moose.

S.F. And a lot, all the kinds with partridge, all the kinds ^{of it}. ~~you want.~~

G.P. Well I assume you didn't stay there forever. Where did you go from Ostrum?

S.F. Then from there I moved to (Baffino). (Baffino) is ninety-five and a half mile from Capreol.

G.P. Ninety-five and a miles north?

S.F. West of Capreol.

G.P. West, west.

S.F. On the other side of Gogama . . .

G.P. On the LLK, yes.

S.F. You know Gogama?

G.P. Yes. Yes.

S.F. Well it's on the other side of Gogama, yeah; and I walk there in the year, ~~1922~~, 1928, in July I think it was, that might be the Cora stable; and there was a kiosk at the Colombino, twenty-two mile on this side of Brent.

G.P. Oh, yes. On this side of . . .

S.F. Used to be, they got ~~us~~ some (fairist place there) kiosk

G.P. Oh yes.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. So you went back there or started went to there.

S.F. The section use to call a colour seed, when I work in there.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And I worked there for a little over a year; and then they qualified me as foreman; and I saw they get foreman job; and then ^{you know} a job come open you know as a section of men and I beat and I got it.

G.P. Oh, in Capreol.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. When you worked at the kiosk, you were working as a . . .

S.F. A trackman.

G.P. A trackman, again or still as a trackman.

S.F. Yeah, yeah.

G.P. And you kept working your way up.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. Until you became . . .

S.F. Then they classified me as a foreman, eh?

G.P. As a foreman.

S.F. Yeah. ~~the~~ ^{five} six men, six foreman, six foreman is ^a ~~form~~ ^{man} like you know?

G.P. I see.

S.F. Six men induced in labor.

G.P. So when did you come to Capreol?

S.F. I move here ⁱⁿ and January, 1930.

G.P. January of 1930.

S.F. That's right.

G.P. Fortunate to have a job, that being the Depression.

S.F. Well I'd bid.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. Well I had seniority then.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. You had to be . . .

G.P. You would build up your seniority.

S.F. That's right. Yeah, that's why, otherwise you'll never come in here.

G.P. No.

S.F. And then I had a hard time during the Depression there and all. I had you know, six, seven men behind me by that time. But then you know, they start to lay off ^{without} ~~it~~ ^{was the} ~~junior~~ ^{(only)?} men left here.

G.P. You were the last one who was kept.

S.F. Yeah. Then I was lucky cause I got a job as a, run a snow plow. And then they use to keep me in the winter-time for the snow plow, eh? And I ~~was~~ ^{there} on the snow plow for ^{twenty five} years, from year, to what, too many years (unintelligible) ^{from here to Folliet.}

G.P. From here to Folliet you operated the snow plow?

S.F. That's right. For ^{twenty five} winter. And at the time I went to (unintelligible) and Parrysound too.

G.P. All the way down to Parrysound?

S.F. Yeah, well sometime you know, they, they had a plow ~~that~~ was out and they need an extra one. ~~What~~ ^{where} they you know. You gotta go you can't refuse, eh? You gotta go.

G.P. When you weren't operating the snow plow what were you doing?

S.F. Well just replace, well replace the plow when the plow goes out. But then when it comes in here, I had to work. ~~I had to work~~ ^I on ~~the~~ ^{on} the track, eh? Picked in ice ~~I~~ ^I sound the horn, and change the rail end of it . . .

G.P. Sure, sure all of those jobs that we associate with railroading.

S.F. That's right. That's right.

G.P. You retired in the 1960s?

S.F. Four . . .

G.P. Ninety~~four~~^{five}-sixty-four after, just a little over forty years.

S.F. In May, in May.

G.P. In May of '64, after over forty years of service.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. On the railroad. You worked for the Ontario Northland for a while.

S.F. Yeah, on the summertime when the extra gang could work and they ~~would come~~ ^{would} on the section and an extra gang in there would work. You know, this gang ~~till I get~~ ^{like ah} . . .

G.P. Yes, when was this?

S.F. 1925.

G.P. '25.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. You wouldn't have lost your seniority with the Canadian National?

S.F. Well I did.

G.P. Yes, you only, you only had a couple of years seniority

G. I suppose, or . . .

S.F. Yeah, I did. Yeah, I left a little bit you know. I
(would have more even but . . .)

G.P. Why would you have switched over to Ontario Northland, did you think that, that was a better opportunity at the time?

S.F. Well the trouble at that *Qstrum*) ~~over~~ there, *you know,* they cut one man, there were two men and a foreman, eh?

G.P. Oh, they cut one man.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. And you were the . . .

S.F. Yeah and I was left there, my dad didn't know that, there was always a little trouble there. One time he had a little handy couch mounted by train, eh? And I got so scared you know, that time is not like now. Now they gotta phone, they gotta, they go to dispatcher give ~~another one up or nothing, eh?~~
a little, at that time you had nothing, eh?

G.P. What were you, what were you concerned about? The fact that you were isolated?

S.F. Well no, I was too young to work you know, in trouble like that you know, they'll give it to you anytime, eh?

G.P. Yeah it was dangerous.

S.F. There's a danger like you know?

G.P. Yes.

S.F. So a friend of mine, he was working in North-Bay. He says come on ~~here~~ *and I just took*), you know?

G.P. Sure.

S.F. But then I realised it over after, eh? And well I work on the gang and I'd be twenty-five. I said: "Gee," I said: "This is *(unintelligible)*" And they never work steady because extra gang you know it's just . . .

G.P. Seasonal work . . .

S.F. Trouble job, eh?

G.P. Yes, yes.

S.F. And then in the wintertime if you make a couple hundred dollars, you know *(you gotta give twenty, twenty-five dollars and all that, eh? Of course you know, you know. So I then I set my mind, I says I'm going back to work for...*

G.P. Want to go back to the C.N. and you're gonna hand in there.

S.F. And that's it. That's what I did you know?

G.P. And eventually get located where you wanted to be.

S.F. That's it, yeah, that is seniority *(start to go)* and then they go away.

G.P. You started to work your way up and eventually you got into Capreol.

S.F. Yeah, yeah.

G.P. I assume at that time, Capreol was the place to work, that most people if not all were trying to end up in Capreol.

S.F. Well . . .

G.P. In this area . . .

S.F. Of course *Capreol* was hanging all the ~~small~~ population, the smaller population, you know. But, the other everybody had a job at that time.

G.P. They had the facilities here and it was permanent.

S.F. Yeah, in order to get a job you had to know the *(card)* shop, would appear the box car, there was a full there you know, people with their own houses, *(unintelligible)* you know?

G.P. Okay, alright, I think we've gained an idea as to your career with Canadian National, and we'll turn the program over now to our music host, and when we return, I'd like to talk about railroading more specifically, and certain types of work that you had, and what it was like working on the C.N.. First we'll turn the program back to our music host.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Sam Farelli is our guest today on Memories & Music. Mr. Farelli having worked for over forty years with the Canadian National Railway. Mr. Farelli you started off in the siding of Ostrum, north of Capreol . . .

S.F. West of Capreol

G.P. West of--I keep saying north--

S.F. Sixty-mile west of Capreol.

G.P. Sixty-nine miles west, never, I've never been up there I must say

S.F. No, don't go, don't go

G.P. No, you wouldn't encourage it.

S.F. No.

G.P. What was it like up there in the '20s?

S.F. Oh, very lonesome. Just, just the section houses, when I went there was the former three men. They cut one off and they were just the two former two men.

G.P. So they were from, labor force of four to three, depending. And what was your job? You had to look after a section of the track (*Assume*), that was one of their *responsibility*.

S.F. Well of course I ~~was~~ going to the foreman's section, section form I was ~~one of the~~ section men, just *(section)* men, eh? *only a*

G.P. Yes, so you looked after a section of the track?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. To make sure that it was

S.F. Yeah, yeah, we had seven mile of track.

G.P. Seven miles to look after.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. The four of you?

S.F. Yeah, three, three

G.P. The three of you, the three of you.

S.F. In the wintertime, *three.*

G.P. Right. To me when I think of a place like Ostrum, I think of a very isolated area and it must have been.

S.F. It's worse then that yet.

G.P. Worse.

S.F. Oh yeah.

G.P. Worse then isolated.

S.F. Oh yeah, worse then that *you had to (Fe) cold, my God!*

G.P. Tell us about it.

S.F. Eh?

G.P. Tell us about it. What was it like up there?

S.F. Well it's only bush, only see moose and wolf and fox and is a lots of rabbits, lots of partridge . . .

G.P. Right.

S.F. You know.

G.P. But you . . .

S.F. *take* We use to eat a lots of free meat sometime you know because ~~think of the~~ rabbits and the ~~we~~ have no guns that kill moose but I had a good arm ^{you know} with a stone ~~and~~ to kill the rabbits and the partridge . . .

G.P. Oh yes. Probably do that just to break the boredom anyhow at times I suspect.

S.F. Oh yeah, oh yeah.

G.P. Well you lived in a, in a section house or whatever it was called.

S.F. Yeah, ⁱⁿ a section house, yeah.

G.P. Was it a box car?

S.F. No. No.

G.P. No?

S.F. A house like this, you had the three bedroom upstairs . . .

G.P. Oh, it was a house.

S.F. But it was very cold. It was a C.N.R. house, *yes. eh?*

G.P. A C.N.R. house?

S.F. Yeah.

But it was very cold. You know one night . . .

G.P. The . . . oh, I'm sorry go ahead. One night . . .

S.F. One night you know, we it was bedtime and ^{oh} boy, was it ever cold. I hate to go upstairs because it was too cold, eh? So the stove wasn't on the stair, so I go up to stove with the coal again, you know? And after I put the light off, I happen to look on the corner on the front road, and outside it was so nice, clear the moon shine nice and noone, I, I see the corner up there, at the room there, I couldn't see the reflection of the moonlight ^{night} outside right through . . .

G.P. Mmhh . . . right through the corner . . .

S.F. Yeah. That's how warm it was in the house . . .

G.P. Yes, near the box-stove in the house?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. Tell us about a typical day, in Ostrum, How did it begin? Did ~~you'd~~ get up early I assume?

S.F. Well . . .

G.P. Had to ~~attend~~ to the fire?

S.F. I start the day, the first time I went there it was in the fourteen of October and, well they had to get up in the morning, you know it was at five ^{thirty} because before you, you light your stove and boil some water to make up coffee; and, and then cook your breakfast; and then they gotta fix your lunch because you never eat, you never come back home to eat your lunch at home.

G.P. No.

S.F. No, because he had a pump car there eh?

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And . . .

G.P. Yes, you wouldn't want to pump your way back.

S.F. You got no time in an hour.

G.P. No, no.

S.F. ~~To go out~~ ^{you got one hour.} . . .

G.P. Yes

S.F. You gotta no time to go ^{no} ~~up~~ ~~one~~ place.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. What you gotta do, go in the bush build fire; and your sandwich frozen like a piece of rock, you gotta unthaw it against the fire.

G.P. Yes, thaw ^{it} out. What time were you to start work, eight o'clock?

S.F. Eight o'clock.

G.P. You had to be on the job at eight?

S.F. That's right.

G.P. Alright. So you got up at five thirty and you started the fire at breakfast, made your lunch . . .

S.F. Yeah, yeah, and then you know you, well you gotta eat your breakfast and make your lunch; and then you gotta go; and bring some wood in ^{prepared}) because sometime in the night you know, you never know, you might come home late . . .

G.P. Might be dark when you ^{got} ~~come~~ back.

S.F. Yeah, you never know, eh? Because a couple of time we gotta caught with a snowstorm, eh? And it dried up the hand car, you know push the hand car to bring it home there; and it's a little bit you know, hard for the night; and by the time you light the stove again, but if you carried wood in, well your all set, eh? You only need to walk into there, wash and light the stove, and . . .

G.P. I see, you'd be out working at eight and lunch would be one hour; and what time did the day finish in terms of your work, five o'clock? Would you start back at five?

S.F. Five o'clock was supposed to be the end of a day.

G.P. Would it take you an hour to get back sometimes?

S.F. No, no but we use to work a lot . . .

G.P. No.

S.F. You know, eight to twelve . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And then twelve to one is . . .

G.P. Lunch.

S.F. Is a lunch hour, eh?

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And then from one to five.

G.P. Right and then to get back to the house, how long might it take you?

S.F. Well it depend on . . .

G.P. I know, depend on how far you were but could it take up to an hour?

S.F. Well sometime an hour, sometime half an hour . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. You know.

G.P. Alright, so you'd get back . . .

S.F. But of course, no, wait now, five o'clock we suppose to be back on the section house.

G.P. Oh, be back to the house by five.

S.F. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh yeah.

G.P. Oh, I see.

S.F. We suppose to be back cause see, we leave at eight o'clock, we suppose to be back at five o'clock.

G.P. I see.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. Very cold there I assume.

S.F. Oh, my god it cold, don't talk about cold.

G.P. No, you're still cold from that experience.

S.F. Fifty-five, or sixty was everyday. Fifty-five or sixty was everyday.

G.P. Fifty-five to sixty below zero.

S.F. Everyday.

G.P. You have to break the ice to get at your water.

S.F. That's right. Oh yeah.

G.P. How did you get water there?

S.F. Well, the one on the ^{for} ~~roof~~ of the house like wash your clothes and thing. We use to have a well there.

G.P. You had a well.

S.F. But ^{to bring your} ~~the drain~~ the water, we use to get a two mile west at Mileage 71, there was spring water there, so we use to, we had a little wooden keg. I don't remember if it was five gallon or what it was now, but we use to fill it out and then every night, *(you bring a pail over there and you fill it in and bring it home.*

~~S.F. And I had to fill it in and bring it home.~~

G.P. You'd bring home a keg of water every night, from two miles beyond.

S.F. Yeah, too drink.

G.P. Spring, water.

S.F. Yeah, just to drink water.

G.P. Just, drinking water.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. The water level in the well must have fluctuated, you were commenting that it was difficult to get the water out of it at times.

S.F. Then when it get to the real middle of the winter, then the water goes right down to the water . . .

G.P. Right down.

S.F. ~~We~~ ^{had} to go down with water pail and . . .

G.P. And a dipper?

S.F. ^{And a cup there,} And fill in a pail.

G.P. Yes, you have to use a dipper to put the water in the pail, you climbed down ~~the~~ ^{into} the wall to get the water.

S.F. (^{The dipper's} ~~for~~ ^{into} ~~But it was too big,~~ ^{you have to use, o.})
~~A cup.~~
A cup.

- G.P. And ^{use that} ~~you saw~~ water over and over . . .
- S.F. Oh, we went through hardship I tell you, not like now.
- G.P. No, I can imagine.
- S.F. Sixty-minute, you ^{had} lucky an hour. They gotta cold and hot water, and ~~everything inside, then after outside~~ then you have to go out of town. ^(unintelligible)
- G.P. You worked six days a week?
- S.F. Six days, yeah.
- G.P. You were paid for six days a week.
- S.F. That's right, yeah.
- G.P. What would you have earned back in 1923, '24?
- S.F. Well, two dollars a day.
- G.P. Two dollars a day.
- S.F. Well, twenty-five cents an hour.
- G.P. Twenty-five cents an hour.
- S.F. For six months, then I went to thirty.
- G.P. Up to thirty cents an hour.
- S.F. Yeah. After one year, you get thirty-six cents an hour. After two year, you get thirty-eight. That's, that's regular pay, thirty-eight cents ~~any~~ ^{there}, that's it. That's three dollars and four cents a day.
- G.P. What did you do on your day off?
- S.F. We use to carry the water and boil the water; and then wash the clothes; and wash the floor; and clean up the house, you know, ~~there was~~ ^{is} only day that they could do that.
- G.P. You'd work hard, as hard if not harder?
- S.F. Well it's harder than working on the track.
- G.P. Working on the . . .
- S.F. Because you know you've gotta do, you know, before it gets a dark, eh? ^{yeah.}

G.P. So you wouldn't come out on that day? ^{off} You couldn't get out, ~~over there~~.

S.F. No; not even if you wanted ~~to get out~~, ^{you couldn't get out,} they wouldn't let you out.

G.P. How long would you of stayed there at a time, in Ostrum?

S.F. Well . . .

G.P. Half a year, a year?

S.F. You mean, before . . .

G.P. Before you would come out.

S.F. You come out and go back again, you mean, eh?

G.P. Yes, yes, yes.

S.F. Well, I would say about every, we use to come out every six months because to do like, you know, summer, for summer clothes; and for winter clothes, eh? But I can't go. ^{in the fall}

G.P. So you'd stay in there for six months at a time, you might come out twice a year.

S.F. Yeah, twice a year. And you're lucky if they send you too. Sometime you had to, you had to write to somebody to sand you some clothes because they won't let you go out. Sometime . . .

G.P. They, they wouldn't let you out.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. You couldn't get a pass on a train to, the train wouldn't stop, or . . .

S.F. No.

G.P. No.

S.F. Well we had a local but to have a pass we gotta pay.

G.P. You had to pay for the pass.

S.F. ^{Well} ~~Right~~, if I gotta pay, if I loose you know, I loose a couple of ^{day}) to go to North-Bay.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And then to pay my fair to go to North-Bay and back again

G.P. Right.

S.F. I might as well stay in North-Bay because I gotta go up you know, almost fifteen days just for that. Oh yeah.

G.P. I should think so. That kind of a lifestyle would be very hard on a lot of people.

S.F. Yeah, it was.

G.P. It must have been. Some people can endure that and get by.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. But I should think for some it must have been just pure hell.

S.F. Well, you see the trouble is, this is the time, that's it that's what it was, not like today.

G.P. People were accustomed to it, more were accustomed to it.

S.F. Well, you see today, it could a jump for one job to another. And if you don't like this job, either you quit, or they fire you, but you get unemployment insurance, you know what I mean. By the time there was no such a thing.

G.P. No.

S.F. If you, if you *had something to eat, if you don't, you starve* that's it.

G.P. Noone ~~was~~ ^{was} going to look after you.

S.F. Well, no.

G.P. No.

S.F. Except if you gotta a father, younger boys they gotta a father and mother to look after them. It's different. Like me I had nobody.

G.P. No. You had a job and you were thankful to have that job.

S.F. That's all, sure.

G.P. Tell us about some of your other work. You mentioned that you were involved with a snow, snow-removal in this section, along here.

S.F. Oh yeah, well I, well then you see they classified me as a foreman; and then I start to get other job here; and there you know, foreman job up in the year ^{thirty-}ninē; and then I get ~~job~~ on this snow-plow.

bid job, like I said

G.P. Right.

S.F. From, like from 1940, yeah. From Capreol to Foliet and I was there between *for twenty-five* the last winter I retire, 1964. *year, you know in the end well*

G.P. Oh I see, so that's what you were doing just about up to . . .

S.F. Just in the wintertime. But I use to go out on the plow, then back here and work of course.

G.P. Did you ever encounter any train wrecks?

S.F. Oh yes. I was in the extra gang last time too.

G.P. What was the cause of the train wrecks? Debris on the track?

S.F. *I was in* There was lots of *derailments* *you know* debris on them and you know sometime you find a broken rail, sometime you find *a bottle of ginoma* *in a car* sometime an old *knocke* *Arch bottom* one of those cars.

G.P. So it could be mechanical, yes.

S.F. It's a matter of different thing you know, yeah. Yeah, it could be the speed sometime you know.

G.P. Sometimes going too fast for the track itself.

S.F. Yeah, you know this big . . .

G.P. Some of those big turns, sure.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. Were you ever involved in a, were you ever on the train when there was an accident or a derailment?

S.F. No, no, no. I was in derailment you know, you take like you know, when they were, you see I was a foreman, assistant-foreman a gang to, or like, *between stream to*.

G.P. *Armstrong, eh?*
Yes.

S.F. And on the (5-), Ottawa.

G.P. Did you, did you ever encounter serious derailments,

where lives were lost.²

S.F. Oh yeah. Yeah. It was a passenger train it went on the rail, right here, it was wash-out here at, just oh, about four and a half mile from here . . .

G.P. Four and a half miles west of here.

S.F. Yeah, 1930 in July.

G.P. July, 1930, there was a wash-out.

S.F. Yeah. And the passenger train, some of the coach went right into the river there.

G.P. Went right into, what river would that be, out there?

S.F. Vermillion River.

G.P. Vermillion River?

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. And lives were lost.

S.F. That's right, yeah.

G.P. Is that right.²

S.F. Yeah. Oh, lots of time it happened that, you know. And then the same year ~~(down here now) they are calling~~ you know on the other side of Skead, ~~(I think it was)~~ 1929. The freight train, they had a wash-out over there, they each went ~~off~~ the track and the five men died, and the engineer ~~died~~.

G.P. Five men dye and the engineer. When was this?

S.F. The fireman.

G.P. The fireman. When was this?

S.F. 1930.

G.P. 1930.

S.F. The same time it happened this . . .

G.P. How would you get the engine back on the track?

S.F. Oh, ~~this went down the river~~ oh We had to build new track.

G.P. ~~And~~ to build is the, what would you do with the engine?
Had

S.F. We got a jig like, like a jig and brought ~~them~~^{it} up.

G.P. Oh, you would bring it up that way?

S.F. Oh yeah.

G.P. You ~~would~~^{should} have to take ~~the~~ track down to it.

S.F. Oh yeah, you gotta put, you gotta, you gotta build new track.

G.P. That must have been something.

S.F. Oh yeah, oh yeah.

G.P. What if some of the . . .

S.F. Through the bush, yeah, they go through the bush build tracks.

G.P. Oh, I can well imagine, well imagine. You'd encounter lots of wildlife. You might even encounter wildlife on the tracks as the trains were going through, would you not? --Moose and deer did you ever encounter . . .

S.F. Oh yeah, oh yeah, lots of them, yeah. Wolf, fox sometime, moose, quite a few moose. They get, the more they get, special, the moose is in the night you know, with a train's ~~you~~^{then} got a bright headlight you know . . .

G.P. They're attracted to the light.

S.F. Yeah, they kinda, I gather though they say they get blind.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. The Indian people say that they get blind and they don't know where to go you know, and . . .

G.P. Yes, well it's the fascination with the light, isn't it?

S.F. Yes.

G.P. As we are often fascinated by fire. *It's very similar.*

S.F. That's right.

G.P. I think we'll end at that point and return the program back to the music host. We'll come back and we'll talk a little bit more about railroading in a few minutes.

S.F. Yeah.

(MUSIC)

- G.P. Sam Farelli is our guest today on Memories & Music. We've been talking about railroading. Mr. Farelli you were working in this area with the C.N. during the Depression. And what was it like? We hear the, the stories about how difficult it was and I suspect, the railroad was one of the major forms of transportation for the unemployed, from what I understand. Would you have quite a few people riding the trains, looking for work?
- S.F. Oh yeah, I think, like you know, every freight, doesn't matter which way he was going, east, west, or south, there was always full of people. ~~The~~ Box-car was full of it. One time I remember oh was it, three C.N.R. policemen and a chief police from Capreol here; and the *yard*) or the, or the yard of the trains there, eh?
- G.P. Yes.
- S.F. There were two-hundred, and I ask chief of police there was two-hundred, seventy-seven men there.
- G.P. Two-hundred and seventy-seven? Where?
- S.F. Yeah, on the sitting rails there, on the track there, you know where ~~the~~ . . .
- G.P. Sitting by the tracks?
- S.F. Yeah, where the freight go in and out, *like* eh?
- G.P. Yes. Waiting for a ride.
- S.F. Well, waiting for a ride, yeah.
- G.P. These people were travelling free. T
- S.F. Well . . .
- G.P. They were trying to sneak on.
- S.F. No. No. Just get on the freight, and that's it. What you gonna do with them?
- G.P. Yeah.
- S.F. *What you gonna do with them?*
You want to get rid of them ~~you know~~ because you know, here they use to, the house was right behind me at one time; and ~~one~~ poor guy was called to go to the workers and engineer, eh? When he come to the bathroom (*window* ---) on top of the back-porch.
- G.P. So the communities would ~~be~~ *would* often encourage them getting back

on the trains. So they'd move on to another one.

S.F. Sure. Let 'em get out.

G.P. Yeah, and also they'd feel sorry for them too, because they were unemployed and they . . .

S.F. Honest to God, you know, you ask my wife *(the lunch we gave)*. Sometime we had to quite because, eye, . . .

G.P. Yeah, there was just too many.

S.F. I had a family too, eh?

G.P. Sure.

S.F. You know what I mean, you know.

G.P. Your heart would go out for these people.

S.F. Oh yeah, but I give 'em (*you know*). When they come to the end of it, eh?

G.P. Yeah, yeah.

S.F. I gotta work for my kids. You know what I mean?

G.P. Sure.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. You were mentioning a few moments ago about a Polish fellow, who walked across, what was the route that he travelled, looking for work?

S.F. He told me, this was *at Bathurst later* at one time . . .

G.P. Back in the Depression.

S.F. Yeah, he was walking it was 19-, what was it now, '27, I think, '26 or '27, I don't remember. He said, he walked from Toronto to Winnipeg, to Vancouver, he said.

G.P. Toronto to Vancouver.

S.F. Yeah. He made the road twice he said.

G.P. Made that trip twice.

S.F. *Walking.* Yeah. Sleep in the shack, sleep beside the track in the night you know and . . .

G.P. Looking for work.

- S.F. Yeah. And then he said whatever the, the section gang like, the foreman and the men, eh? They used to give him a sandwich; and he keep going, that's all, poor fellow ~~he~~ know, yeah.
- G.P. Any other recollections about the depression? What it was like in this area.
- S.F. Well it was bad. Then they cut us you know 10%, and then they cut us another 5% and then they cut us off you know half the day on a Saturday.
- G.P. They were cutting you back on wages?
- S.F. Yeah.
- G.P. Ten percent, five percent, then half a day on Saturday.
- S.F. Yeah, and then ^{we had to} it was hard to keep going, I never forget when I used to bring in about three-hundred ~~a year~~ ^(ties here).
- G.P. Yes.
- S.F. Three four hundred ties ^{here} ~~a year~~; and we use to split wood; and deal a nine, nine, three in a night. After I do my days work. And the Sunday, on the Sunday we use to eat lunch around ten o'clock, get the ax, go in bush cut wood . . .
- G.P. Go into the bush and cut some wood. [REDACTED]
- S.F. And deal about five, five-thirty, and then come home; and then be early for Monday morning again to go to work. It was really hard.
- G.P. How did people, was the Depression particularly bad in the community like Capreol?
- S.F. Yeah, it was, yeah. Yeah it was. The people had a job, they had ^{a job of it,} ~~it~~, the one they had no job, that's it.
- G.P. There was no government assistance.
- S.F. Nothing. Nothing.
- G.P. You had to rely on friends and look about for work.
- S.F. Yeah.
- G.P. It must have been very very tragic for some people.

S.F. Well I think in the city they had a Super-line or whatever they call it *(em)* you know?

G.P. Yes.

S.F. *I don't know about the city, eh?* But I'm talking about Capreol you know. We never had any such thing as Super-line in Capreol.

G.P. No.

S.F. No.

G.P. And your population would mushroom as the transients came through.

S.F. Yeah, and everybody use to walk, nobody had a car.

G.P. No.

S.F. They can't afford to have a car. Everybody use to walk, I see the people you know from near where the water tank is, is up there now?

G.P. Yes in Capreol.

S.F. And they walk on the shop, you know the shop is there, they go to walk every morning and back home every night, the lunch pail on the shoulder; and that's for six days a week.

G.P. You didn't have a car at that time?

S.F. Nobody had a car.

G.P. Nobody.

S.F. No. The doctor had a car. Wait you know, I think in 19-, I don't know if it was three, four cars Jim kept them altogether.

G.P. When?

S.F. 1935, '36.

G.P. Is that right? Twenty-five, twenty-six.

S.F. No, thirty-five, thirty-six.

G.P. Thirty-five, thirty-six, there might have been five cars . . .

S.F. Five, six car I don't think there was any more than that.

G.P. In town. So you wouldn't be taking any trips anywhere at all

S.F. (unintelligible)

G.P. Yes.

S.F. Doctor Maclean, Doctor Lazy, three or four men that I know... .

G.P. What are some of the personalities you remember working on the train? Must have been some real characters, some story-tellers . . .

S.F. Would it have been . . .

G.P. Working on the railroad.

S.F. Between the men, or section men or what?

G.P. Yes, any, any at all, some of the, or else if you can recall some of the memorable experiences you had working on the railroad. You know just reflecting back over forty some years, must have been some memorable experiences.

S.F. Well experience you know, you take like on a train, like we say. I use to know all of them that came through there, eh? All the Sweezy I used to know them you know and . . .

G.P. Sweezy?

S.F. Yeah, Sweezy I know all of them and I always cook you know, MacDonald, I know Wilson, I know oh, lots of them . . .

G.P. Sure.

S.F. Lots of them.

G.P. You get to know all of them. How many people would there be working here in Capreol on the C.N. during the Depression. How many would have been working out of here?

S.F. Oh my God. That's pretty hard

G.P. I know that's testing your memory but approximately how many would you think?

S.F. You mean including the shop and . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. Oh, God I don't know.

G.P. It's, it's hard to say. It, it was cut back though you were saying during the Depression.

S.F. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. There was quite a lay-off because, well transportation you know, come down; and if ~~the train~~ *was strong, they leave a number* because no box-car to repair, you know what I mean, you know, so they gotta, *you* know cut down ~~on~~ the men too, eh?

G.P. Sure. When people travel out to Capreol, one, one item that's of particular interest to them I think is the locomotive that's been preserved out here . . .

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. And I notice you're living right across from it. Tell us a little bit about that locomotive.

S.F. This one here?

G.P. Yes.

S.F. Well, I know *this one*, she started out in ~~the year~~ *here* 1946 I think, it is.

G.P. That started in '46?

S.F. I think so.

G.P. Mhhh . . .

S.F. Well '47, I don't remember now.

G.P. Right.

S.F. And she ~~used to run~~ *she* on the passenger train, ~~three number four~~ *number* from Toronto to Armstrong. ~~There were~~ *three and number four,*

G.P. Toronto to Armstrong, number three and number four.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. When was she retired?

S.F. Well, *oh* geees what year did the diesel came *here*, I forget now. Once they bring the diesel here. Then they move *this* engine up west region.

G.P. They moved it west.

S.F. Yeah in the west region. We have *(the center)* region here, eh?

G.P. Right.

S.F. It went to the west region. And then you know for the west region they brought, they *put it on* oil ~~around~~ *over* there.

G.P. Yes.

S.F. Cause ~~they~~^{when} one she was around ~~here~~^{with} was coal, eh? But then ~~then~~ when they brought them up there they convert it into oil.

G.P. Convert it into oil.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. I see.

S.F. And then they, ~~she~~^{she} come back here and they store her right here in front of the house, here. Yeah, and the poor Angeli, the engineer he run ~~with the C.N.~~^{this engine} from first year, he use to run from south by Capreol . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And then he run from Capreol to Follet.

G.P. What was his name?

S.F. Hanks Devvy.

G.P. Hanks Devvy.

S.F. Hanks, Hanks Devvy.

G.P. I see.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. And . . .

S.F. And the poor fellow he retire but this is west ~~when~~ he retire . . .

G.P. Right.

S.F. When ~~he~~^{they} brought him back here again . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. He use to call me everyday, to take a look at the locomotive.

G.P. He use to come down every day to take a look at that locomotive.

S.F. Poor guy yeah.

G.P. Isn't that something?

S.F. Yeah, well you know, you know ^{it} for so many years . . .

G.P. It brought back good memories I'm sure.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. I would imagine the ~~rail~~^{road} men in this community were pleased that the locomotive was left here, that it was put on . . .

S.F. Oh yes, oh yes.

G.P. It seems like an ~~obvious~~^{obvious} location.

S.F. Well it's something to remember, eh?

G.P. Sure.

S.F. Oh, they got the pump car there, they got . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. The speeder, what do they call it? Yeah, everything's over there.

G.P. Yes, I think it's excellent. Quite a bit of interest in it? Tourists come out and look at it?

S.F. Oh yeah, oh yeah. But well they figure the, they had to put a fence, you should see what they did before, they smash everything the kids you know? The young boys . . .

G.P. That's unfortunate.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. But it's at least, they're trying to preserve it and . . .

S.F. Oh yeah. It's, it's a nice. You should see the people they come in the summertime and they stop and look at it you know and . . .

G.P. Sure. Also an important part of our history, isn't it?

S.F. Yeah. Yeah.

G.P. Alright, we'll, we'll return to our music host. When we come back we'll wrap the program up.

S.F. Yeah.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Sam Farelli's been our guest today on Memories & Music, Mr. Farelli living in the community of Capreol and actually lived in this area pretty well since the 1920s in

this general area, *you've lived north* . . .

S.F. 1930, 1930.

G.P. 1930, ~~yeah~~.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. The community's changed a lot, since you came in 1930 and what have been some of the major changes in Capreol?

S.F. Well Capreol it got bigger, it got way bigger than what it used to . . .

G.P. Yes.

S.F. And improved quite a bit, and I can always say they got all the street all paved when before it was all sand, eh? And all sidewalk . . .

G.P. Very dusty in the summer.

S.F. Yeah, sure. And *now* everybody got ~~the~~ *you know* a lawn in the front of the house which keep the tone a little bit of greenery, you know; and where before you know they wouldn't exist that eh?

G.P. Ng.

S.F. And you gotta quite a new subdivision, there's quite a few built there, now the subdivision across the track here, you know quite a few houses built there you know and, so ~~it~~ *they* improved quite a bit you know; and then the C.N. moved the officer of North-Bay up here, they had to build another couple building here which you know *(scribble)* most of the town quite a bit, eh?

G.P. You're living on Blair Street, how long have you lived here in this particular house?

S.F. I bought this house in 1927.

G.P. '27.

S.F. Yeah, three years before I moved here.

G.P. So this whole area right here has changed a lot.

S.F. Yeah.

G.P. You knew three years before you came that you might want to live in Capreol, that's optimistic.

S.F. No.

I tell you what happened, it happened that you know, one time there was a friend of mine you know, one who works that ~~at Bathro~~ *(Bathro)*. 1927 in the spring and he said he moved up to the, like he had money in the bank a lot, you know what I mean put money in the bank, he said if you buy a house he could double the interest that he'd get on a bank, to rent a house; and talk and talk and pushing . . .

G.P. So he bought it as an advancement . . .

S.F. To buy this house here, I paid fifteen hundred dollars of course it was an all water work, no cellar . . .

G.P. No.

S.F. And I, I rent for ~~twenty-five~~ *dollars* a month that time. Twenty-five dollars a month, that was a lot of money at that time twenty-five dollars.

G.P. Sure, it would be.

S.F. Yeah, but then they had to, they had to build the foundation put waterwork in ~~in~~ . . .

G.P. Right.

S.F. And put furnice in and you know . . .

G.P. You worked ~~for~~ *with* the railroad for over forty years, you must have enjoyed the experience. You had to if you . . .

S.F. Well I did, one way I did, but the other way I had to. You know what I mean?

G.P. You had to job because you needed it. *(You take like under pressure there you gonna go)*

S.F. That's right. And after the Depression you see the thing *'s* improving and improved but you don't know how far it gonna go.

G.P. No.

S.F. If you ever gonna quit one job to go to another, no I've already got ~~secure~~ *you know* ~~with~~ this job, we say, eh? I know that I got enough seniority enough *(service?)* and all that. If I quit here and go to another job . . .

G.P. You loose that seniority.

S.F. I loose everything and my tail won't last very long.

G.P. No. ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~

S.F. But lots of people they did and they improved themselves quite a bit, they got higher money, you see.

G.P. Sure. Oh there're advantages and disadvantages of that, very definitely, but when you look back after working with them for forty-seven years, you look back ~~of~~ ^{upon} the company favourably I assume . . .

S.F. Oh yeah.

G.P. You enjoyed it. Well I think we'll wrap the program up on, on that note thank you Mr. Farelli on behalf of Memories & Music for being with us today. Certainly rail-roading in this area and in Capreol in particular is an important part of our history and I feel our listening audience have ~~been~~ ^{gained} considerably from your conversation with us today. Again thank-you.

S.F. Well this is only a railroad (²) whatever they call them, eh?

G.P. Sure. Thank-you very much.

S.F. You're welcome.

(END OF TAPE)