

## Joseph Skowron: A Man With Many Passions

Joseph Skowron, a mechanical engineer, outdoor enthusiast, and farmer, has experienced a life full of adventure. From climbing Mount Rainier to growing his own produce, Skowron really takes advantage of all the things life has to offer. Skowron was born December 20, 1962, into a Polish speaking family, on the North side of Chicago, across from Humboldt Park. He is the younger brother of Alexander Skowron and the older brother of Mark Skowron.

Skowron and his two brothers went on many adventures together and were very close growing up. They would ride their bikes around their neighborhood with other kids and played sports together in their community, and fished at a local lagoon. The boys also grew up in a very religious household. Church every Sunday and at one point they were all altar boys for their church. Religion has continued to be a very important part of Skowron's life and he still values the same beliefs taught to him as a child.

Skowron first started elementary school at a public school, Von Humboldt, even though his parents wanted him in a Catholic school. "The reason I went there was because my birthday is so late in December, I missed the cut off for Catholic school," Skowron says. He only stayed at Von Humboldt for his kindergarten year and then he was off to St. Fidelis, a Catholic grammar school for first grade until fifth. In January 1974, Skowron's father passed away from complications from a stroke. It was now just the three boys, their mother and grandmother. They then moved from Humboldt park to the NorthWest side and stayed here from Skowron's fifth grade year to his sophomore year of high school.

After they moved, Skowron and his brothers took two city buses by themselves to finish the school year at St. Fidelis. Skowron then started attending grammar school at St. James Parish, where a lot of Polish kids went. Here he was taught by nuns and continued his religious education. His family was not wealthy, so he and his brothers had to step up at a young age to help pay rent since there were five of them living on the second floor of a three flat. During this time, Skowron and his two brothers started working. The first job they all had together was as newspaper delivery boys and had a route in the neighborhood. "It was fun that we got to do that every morning together," says Skowron. His next job started in high school working at a local Italian restaurant as a busboy and later as a cook making pizzas. "I just wanted to earn some extra pocket money," Skowron says.

After living in this home for a couple of years, Skowron and his family moved even farther NorthWest, where he and his brothers attended Weber High. Junior year, Skowron was lucky enough to have gotten a job at the local bank as a teller and ended up working there till after college, almost nine years. Skowron knew what he wanted to do at a young age, even if he didn't realize it. As a child, he was constantly taking toys apart to see how they were made and when it was time for him to pick a major, he knew what path to take. Skowron attended the University of Illinois in Chicago as a mechanical engineering major. He paid for his education by himself, which meant he didn't have much of a social life in college, but it was worth it to him. He graduated in 1986 with a degree in mechanical engineering and on the dean's list.

Still working at the bank, Skowron was on the job hunt for something within his degree. His first engineering job was with a company that made custom packaging equipment and he enjoyed that so much he stayed there for 14 years. The next job he got was working for different companies building medical equipment. For the last 15 years, at four different companies, medical gear has been Skowron's focus. He has no complaints, but is ready to retire in the next three to five years.

Skowron loves nature and being outdoors, so if he weren't pursuing mechanical engineering, he would want to be a climber and make a living off of that. In the winter he enjoys rock and ice climbing, but the summer time is his favorite when he can actually be outside climbing mountains and hiking. In 1998, Skowron got the opportunity to climb Mount Rainier and made it all the way to the summit and back. He also enjoys gardening and growing his own vegetables. In the summer you can find him growing all sorts of produce, like peppers, zucchini, cucumbers, and tomatoes. In the fall he makes preserved pickles, relishes and much more. Skowron says, "I just love being outside, I even like cutting the grass but don't tell anyone that."

Once retired, Skowron wants to spend the rest of his life traveling. He wants to stay in a place for two to three months so he can really get immersed into the culture and live like the people there live. He really appreciates old architecture and trying the local food wherever he is. In the past, he has traveled to Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and South America, for work and for personal trips. Out of these places, Germany was his favorite because of the beautiful architecture and delicious food.

For now, Joseph Skowron continues working in mechanical engineering, growing produce, hiking and spending time with family. He has accomplished many things in his life and is hoping to make more monumental memories in the future.