

## OUR TRIP TO THE TOP OF A GLACIER

**M**argene and I took a side trip in a 6-seat helicopter to the top of a glacier during our cruise to Alaska in 1997. The ground crew buckled us in a minute or so before the pilot came out. When I saw how young he looked, I asked how old he was – he said 23. I thought, oh my, he's no older than our sons. My instinct was for us to just eat the \$450 tickets and get off that death machine while the getting was good. When the helicopter lifted off and kept climbing higher and higher and higher, I thought *What on earth have I gotten us into?* There were stiff wind gusts that day, and the copter was being bounced around like a ping-pong ball. Margene was in the seat between me and the pilot, with three other people in the back. I was seated by the left door, which was made of a single piece of molded Plexiglas. I could see straight down to the ground and nearly wet myself every time I glanced away from intently staring at my lap. My left hand had a death grip on the locked handle of the door. Margene knew I was spooked, but she kept pressing me to *Take a picture! Take a picture!* That would have required both hands, and I wasn't about to let go of that handle. She kept hounding me about taking pictures, and I was really getting annoyed at her. But there were four strangers within earshot, so I couldn't very well snap at her to just shut up and mind her own business. She finally started snickering when I wouldn't turn loose of the door handle. Then she broke into that infectious laugh of hers, which made me start laughing. Below is a picture of us standing safe and sound atop Chilkat Glacier near Skagway. We had so much fun on that cruise. We planned to go back to Alaska in 2011, but it wasn't to be. Margene was the coolest person I ever knew, the best thing that ever happened to me.

