

On June 30, 2018, I took my first solo flight as a student pilot. I had begun the day flying with my CFI, Phil Cypret, at McClellan Airfield in a C-152, N4962L. We stayed in the traffic pattern and did multiple touch-and-goes. Phil told me that those landings were all excellent, and after about one hour of practice he gave me permission to fly solo.

I took off just as before and climbed to 1,100 feet, entering the traffic pattern. As I was nearly abeam the numbers on my downwind leg, I noticed a helicopter cut me off and land on the runway, which is something I had not encountered at all before in my training. I continued making radio calls as I turned base, assuming that the helicopter would be exiting the runway. As I turned final, it remained on the runway and it became clear that it was not going leave, and I made a radio call announcing my intention to go around. During this whole time, I never heard any radio response from the helicopter pilot.

When I was passing over the helicopter on my go around, he said on the radio "I'm looking for the Cessna that's going around." As he said this, he was starting to ascend, directly beneath me. I was frightened because he could not see me and was heading directly for me. I told him that I was directly overhead, and at that point I was able to continue to the traffic pattern to land. All of this made me very anxious – again, it was my *first time* ever piloting an aircraft by myself. From that point on, I was rattled mentally. I'm sure for an experienced pilot an incident such as this would have been a routine inconvenience, but for me, a student with 25 hours, it felt like a near-death experience.

As I turned final and landed, the aircraft touched down and immediately ballooned back up. In retrospect, I know I should have added power and went for another go around. However, with the experience I'd just had, I was not prepared for a landing like this. The airplane bounced three or four times, the nose gear tire blew, and the propeller struck the ground.