

Tests by Skylab Spiders Hint Man's Adaptability

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RALEIGH, N. C., Sept. 29—Anita and Arabella, the two space spiders who overcame weightlessness and spun their webs aboard the orbiting Skylab, have bolstered the scientific suggestion that human beings may be far more adaptable to unusual experiences than is generally believed.

This is the preliminary conclusion of Dr. Peter Witt, a researcher at Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh, who studied the behavior patterns in spiders. Dr. Witt bred and raised the two spiders and chose them for the space flight that ended this week.

In a limited sense, Dr. Witt said, the study of spiders can be applied to human beings since there are some things that are common to all animals.

From the performance of the spiders at a level higher than expected, Dr. Witt concluded:

"I think that now we can expect that many nonintellectual functions in animals, including human beings, are far more adaptable and able to be reprogramed and reorganized than we ever thought them to be.

"We can cope with situations at a nonintellectual, non-conscious level that have never been experienced in the history of living beings."

Two Questions Posed

Weight and gravity are crucial to the weaving of a web, what does a spider do in weightlessness? How does a living being react to a stressful and very unexpected, unprepared-for situation?

Dr. Witt was surprised that the spiders learned to weave their webs in outer space.

"I think it is most surprising because it took a readjustment of everything they have known before in their behavior," he said.

"If you think about the as-

tronauts, how they adapted," he said, "they did it all by planning, by reading books, by making calculations, by having done it from previous flights. None of this is true for the spiders. They had to do it in what you might call the instinctive way.

"So, if we say that they are very much less adaptable than humans, and do not have the ability of forethought and planning, then we would expect that they would be completely helpless," he said. "But it took just two days to get over it and manage to spin their webs."

Second Spider Dies

HOUSTON, Sept. 29 (Reuters)—Arabella, the last surviving member of an animal collection aboard the Skylab space station, was found dead last night in her cage at Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala., the National Space and Aeronautics Administration said here today.