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September 29, 1971

Wing Commander Peter Whittingham

RAF Farnborough

Institute of Aviation Medicine

County Hampshire

Aldershot

ENGLAND

Dear Cdr. Whittingham:

SUBJECT: EKG Tapes of Shelia Scott's Flight

After several abortive attempts to reach you by telephone and by Phil Chapman I will try the mail service. The original EKG tapes are in my possession with copies. In addition, I made some rather hasty strip chart recordings of the average heart rate as well as selective 25 mm per second portions from the records. It was originally planned to have the manufacturer make available on loan to you one of the slow speed playback units so that you could play the original records directly. However, a letter to the manufacturer from one of your London Ministries made this seem gross impertinence. The representative, who was carrying the recorder over, loaned it elsewhere. The copies, which I have, are also made at the one inch per minute speed, and as such, would require special playback facilities. However, it should be no great difficulty to re-record them here on some more standard tape format and send you this.

Shelia apparently has the proverbial British heart for the records were unremarkable except for their small variations. With the scanty amount of information it was difficult to make any correlation of rate with external events except in a very approximate fashion. There appeared to be a typical pattern of small increase in rate, say 15 to 18 beats per minute on takeoff, and little or none of the variation which most of us associate with landing. There were periodic short bursts of increase in rate, say from 90 beats per minute to 110 or thereabouts; but again these cannot be correlated with external events. On the polar leg when apparently there were aircraft difficulties, there were rates in the 115 beat per minute region for longer periods.



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There was no evidence of arrhythmia or other abnormalities at any point, not even a single P.V.C.; and although the records were relatively noisy on every leg, the quality was such that all aspects of the single lead could be examined. There was one obviously potent source of interference in the aircraft which may have well been an SCR firing.

If you will let me know what you would like done with these tapes I will try to arrange it even to the extent of getting the loan of a low speed playback unit from the manufacturer if the Ministry letter did not reflect your feelings in the matter.

Respectfully,

William Thornton, M.D.  
NASA Astronaut