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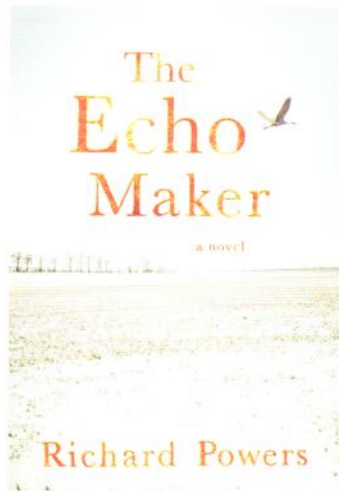
THE MENTOR
WHO CHANGED
MY LIFE

THE
smart
ISSUE

NICOLE WILLIAMS: 2007'S BRILLIANT WOMAN TO WATCH

A reading OF THE MINDS

Four of the country's smartest women
tell us what they're reading.



Katrina Firlik, 38, Brain Surgeon and Professor, Yale School of Medicine

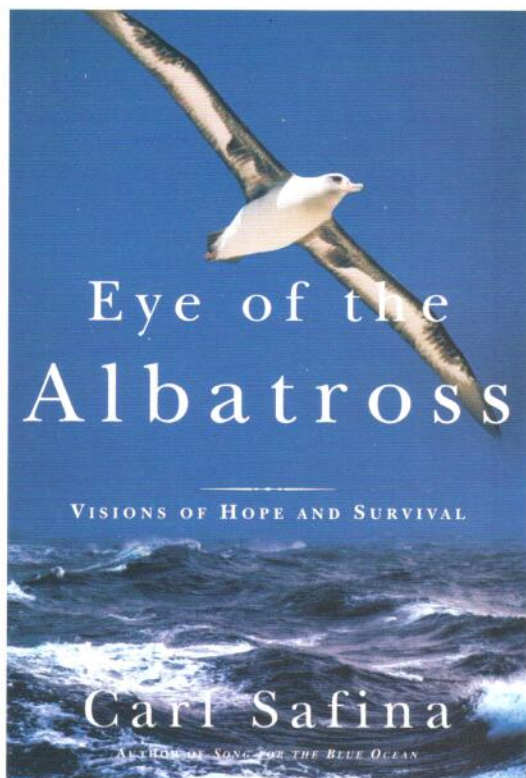
Author of *Another Day in the Frontal Lobe* (Random House, 2006)

What book are you reading right now? I just started *The Echo Maker*, by Richard Powers, because I heard a discussion about it on NPR. It's a novel about a young man with a neurological disorder. His doctor is sort of an Oliver Sacks-type character.

Oliver Sacks is a neurologist who writes about his own patients in bestsellers such as, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. Did he inspire your writing career? Yes. I love his books. Sacks is very good at telling an interesting story while still being sensitive to his patients—something I struggle with. He gave a lecture when I was in medical school and I got to drive him to the airport afterwards. He's such an unusual character—sort of an absentminded professor. He gave a brilliant lecture and then left his wallet in my car.

What book would you recommend to other smart women? *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. It was published in 1990, and it's one of the first books to examine the psychology of what makes people happy. I have brilliant friends from college and medical school who have everything going for them, but are struggling with the day to day of what makes them happy. I think that's a big issue for smart women.

What's your guilty pleasure read? You're going to laugh, but, *Zagats Survey of New York Restaurants*. I'm a huge Japanese food fan. I like to make little notes by all the places I've gone, and the places I want to go.



Elissa Rudolph, 60, Highest ranking female member, Mensa International

What book are you reading right now? I just finished *Death in the Everglades* by Stuart McIver. In the late 1800s there was a fashion craze for white feathers in women's hats. Hunters came to Florida to kill egrets and herons for their beautiful plumes—worth more than gold at the time! The book is about Guy Bradley, the first man killed while protecting the birds—he's considered one of the country's first environmentalists. I got my masters degree in the history of Florida, so I love to read books about the state—usually two at a time!

What book would you recommend to other smart women? Any book by Carl Safina—he writes fascinating non-fiction about the natural world. I like that he has oodles of doctorates but can write in layman's terms. In *Eye of the Albatross*, he describes how the albatross spends only two percent of its life on land. Imagine flying 98 percent of your life! We are not the most incredible beings on this planet.

What's the IQ requirement to be in Mensa? You can't give a number score—because there are lots of different IQ tests, but all Mensa members are in the upper 2 percent of the general population.

How did you decide to join? I saw an article in *Cosmopolitan* in the 1970s—when I was single—about the fact that Mensa had three male members for every one woman. So I thought, I could go to a bar to look for a husband, or I could join this organization.

Did you end up marrying a Mensa member? Yes—two of them!