

TROY MAN HAS A LOT ON HIS MIND IQ TEST PROVES WHAT MANY SUSPECTED: HE'S ONE IN 10 MILLION

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You might say that Keith Raniere is one in a million.

He's a member of Mega, a high-IQ society with a minimum requirement at the one-in-a-million level. Actually, the 27-year-old Troy resident is in an even more exclusive category. By answering correctly all but two questions on a 48-question, self-administered test, Raniere moved up to the rarified one-in-10-million level. To qualify for membership in the Mega Society, aspirants must answer correctly at least 45 questions. According to the society, that corresponds to an IQ of 176 or more. People of average intelligence, by contrast, have IQs that cluster around a score of 100.

A number of IQ societies go beyond Mensa, the well-known organization limited to the top 2 percent of the population, or those who score higher than 132 on a standard Stanford-Binet intelligence test. Each of these little-publicized societies is more selective than the next.

The mastermind behind many of them is Ronald K. Hoeflin, philosopher and librarian, who has made an avocation of forming increasingly more elite clubs for geniuses such as himself (he has an IQ of 150).

Hoeflin says curiosity about his own IQ led him in 1969 to join the Mensa Society. Six years ago the New York City resident founded Mega. After it grew to include 26 members - and lost some of its exclusivity - he restructured it to include only two persons, Eric Hart of Long Island and Marilyn vos Savant of Missouri. Raniere is the most recent member. All three will be listed in the next issue of the Guinness Book of World Records.

(vos Savant, who writes the "Ask Marilyn" column for Parade Magazine, is listed in the record book as the woman with the highest IQ. Last August, Savant, whose surname means "learned person," married Dr. Robert Jarvik, inventor of the Jarvik 7 artificial heart.)

Geniuses, apparently, are born, not made. Raniere says he was identified early as a bright child. By age 2 he could spell the word "homogenized" from seeing it on the milk carton. He was precocious in math development and says he had an understanding of subjects such as quantum physics and computers by age 4.

By the time he was 16, the Brooklyn-born genius says he had exhausted the curriculum at his high school. He dropped out of school and entered RPI where he simultaneously earned undergraduate degrees in math, physics and biology. To do that he had to take 60 credits in addition to the 124 credits required for a single major. RPI spokesman Matt McGuire termed Ranieri's three degrees "an extremely rare accomplishment."

At present, Ranieri works for the state and is an independent educational consultant.

He's not your stereotypical genius. Watchful blue eyes look out from behind aviator glasses. His brown hair is parted stylishly in the middle. He has the physique of an athlete, which he is. He was East Coast Judo champion at age 12, tied with the state record for the 100 yard-dash, is an avid skier, swimmer and wind surfer. He says he plays seven musical instruments and also sings "high tenor" in local musical productions.

He also rides a unicycle and likes to juggle - not necessarily at the same time - but one gets the impression that this amazing young man, who requires only two to four hours of sleep, could do both - if he put his mind to it.

The questions aspiring members of the Mega Society have to answer are real brain busters. Ranieri says they took him two weeks.

"There's no enforceable time limit. Some people take up to a year to answer the questions. It's suggested you limit yourself to no more than one month," he explains.

Unlike with some tests, applicants are encouraged to use such reference aids as dictionaries, thesauri and pocket calculators, he says. Guessing is permitted. There is no penalty for wrong answers or guesses so guessing is advantageous.

Assistance from others, however, is prohibited. "But," says the young genius, "who could give you assistance?"

Who, indeed.