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Book Review

- Introduction to BioMEMS*, by Albert Folch
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Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

We keep trying to make formvar-coated grids but have trouble getting the film to release from the glass slides. Any suggestions other than using nose grease?

Flustered in Philadelphia

Dear Flustered,

I can't believe you wouldn't want to use the time-honored, highly effective nose-grease option! If you're having "non-greasy nose syndrome," then I'm sure you can obtain a similar product from one of the EM vendors. Unverifiable sources tell me Al Coritz has an excellent supply of snake nose grease. One unusual solution is to lick the slide, allow the saliva to dry, and then coat. As my colleague used to say, "If you can't lick 'em, step closer!" I have found that many times it is the quality of heavy breathing on the slide that allows consistent film release. This special quality of breath can only be achieved by increasing the level of alcohol on your breath. I have found that taking a healthy swig of Becherovka raises the alcohol vapor molarity of your breath so that Van der Waals forces will allow release from the slide. Of course this is my theory of Specialty Nasal Inebriated Film Release (or SNIFR)—after 8 or 9 attempts one rarely cares if one has been successful. It could also be affected by the weather, whether the Giants are winning, if there is a full moon, or when you last sent a large donation to the Sisters of Sacred Compliance. In the end, you'll have your film.

Dear Abbe,

I've got a problem with my confocal microscope. When I look through the eyepieces the image seems fine; but when I scan in any mode the image has concentric circles. Why are the rings there?

Going in circles in Ragusa

Dear Connie Centric,

Ach Mein! A certain amount of reflection and the curvature of the lens will appear as concentric rings. You may be observing Newton rings from imaging too close to the coverslip. Another possibility is a deteriorating dichroic allowing laser reflections to leak into the detector. However I feel that the most likely cause of your problem stems from lab mates who are playing tricks on you. I first did this to Wilson Bentley back in 1890. Having traveled to Vermont in January to have him show me his setup for photographing snowflakes, I surreptitiously took out a drawing compass and made thin concentric lines on the photographs. When I pointed these out and asked "What are these?" he was dumbstruck and raced outside to diagnose the problem. Wilson spent the next four hours freezing his Hintern off while Mrs. Bentley and I sipped hot toddies in the parlor. She started playing the piano, and I broke out my Hohner chromonica. We had a grand time. Unfortunately, Wilson ended up with double pneumonia. I kind of regret it now, but it was funny at the time.

Nothing is too mundane or inane for the Professor! If you need assistance with your petty problems, please contact his personal secretary at jshields@cb.uga.edu.