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GIA Joins the Science Channel's *Meteorite Men* on Quest for Extraterrestrial Treasure

New One-Hour Special World Premier Sunday, May 10 at 9 p.m. (ET/PT)

CARLSBAD, Calif. – May 4, 2009 – The Science Channel is taking viewers on a search for extraterrestrial treasures and revealing some of these lost pieces of the universe for the first time in “Meteorite Men,” premiering Sunday, May 10 at 9 p.m. (ET/PT).

Two treasure hunters, Geoff Notkin and Steve Arnold, have travelled the world for years searching for various types of meteorites. They found fragments of a special variety of meteorite that needed the expert analysis performed at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), which is known as the world's foremost authority in gemology.

John Koivula, GIA's chief gemologist and an expert on extraterrestrial and terrestrial gems, helps explain the true nature of the mysteries held in the meteorite on the show.

The fragments in question, according to Koivula, are from a rare stony-iron meteorite known as a pallasite, which contains glassy-looking crystalline fragments of transparent to translucent olivine. These were captured as inclusions in a massive network of two solid elemental metals, nickel and iron.

“Since olivine occurs much more commonly on Earth and is known by its gem name, *peridot*, it is both commercially and scientifically important to be able to separate terrestrial olivine found on Earth from extraterrestrial olivine found in pallasitic meteorites,” Koivula said. “In fact, peridot or olivine extracted from pallasitic meteorites is the only matter from outer space that can, and has been, cut and used as a gem—and knowing the difference is where GIA gets involved.”

Koivula discovered the microscopic means to separate extraterrestrial and terrestrial peridots, and his published research on the subject led meteorite hunters Arnold and Notkin to GIA. On “Meteorite Men,” Koivula explains how a gemological microscope can be used to make this separation. In doing so, he helps illuminate the other-worldly-origin of these meteorites, demonstrating why they, and the olivine extracted from them, are so rare and valuable.

“This form of olivine or peridot is the only extraterrestrial gem we know that is suitable for use in jewelry,” said Koivula, holding up a polished section of pallasitic olivine for the camera. “It has traveled through the universe from a place and time that will never be precisely known. If you are wearing a peridot fashioned from an olivine fragment extracted from a pallasitic

meteorite, that gem could very well be a remnant of the deep interior of some planet or planetoid that no longer exists.”

For more information about GIA visit, www.gia.edu.

About GIA:

An independent nonprofit organization, the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) is recognized as the world's foremost authority in gemology. Established in 1931, GIA has translated its expert knowledge into the most respected gemological education available. Early in the 1950s, GIA invented the famous Four Cs of Color, Cut, Clarity and Carat Weight. In 1953, the Institute created the International Diamond Grading System™ which, today, is recognized by virtually every professional jeweler in the world.

Through research, education, gemological laboratory services, and instrument development, the Institute is dedicated to ensuring the public trust in gems and jewelry by upholding the highest standards of integrity, academics, science, and professionalism. GIA can be found on the web at www.gia.edu. Media queries contact: Laura Simanton 760-603-4112 or Jessica Sachariason, 760-603-4197.

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GIA's John Koivula is interviewed by the Science Channel crew. Photo courtesy of Steven Ty/Science Channel.