



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“THE LEGEND OF THE CRYSTAL SKULLS”
UNCOVERS THE TRUTH BEHIND LEGENDARY CRYSTAL SKULLS
INCLUDING ONE TO BE UNVEILED
AT SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

PREMIERE THURSDAY, JULY 10 ON SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™

(Washington, DC, 7/3/08) Smithsonian Channel™ will premiere an exciting new documentary, **“The Legend of the Crystal Skulls,”** telling the dramatic story of a Smithsonian Institution curator’s 16-year quest to trace the origins of a crystal skull mailed anonymously to the institution in 1992. The show will premiere **Thursday, July 10, 2008** at 8 p.m. ET/PT.

Together with the Smithsonian Channel premiere, the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History will unveil the crystal skull from the documentary to the public on the same day, July 10, for display through September 1st.

Crystal skulls, long-discussed among a devoted following who believe in the skulls’ mystical powers, are prominent this summer due to the release of the Paramount/Dreamworks film, “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull,.

Although the British Museum in London and the Musee Quai Branly in Paris have exhibited crystal skulls in their collections, the July 10 unveiling at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. is a first. It was in 1992 that Smithsonian anthropologist Jane MacLaren Walsh received a call from Richard Ahlborn at the Museum of American History about a heavy parcel addressed to the nonexistent “Smithsonian Inst. Curator, MesoAmerican Museum, Washington, D.C.” In the parcel, which had no return address, was a 31-pound crystal skull. When a colleague turned it over to Walsh, she said, “Don’t look it in the eyes. They’re cursed.”

“The Legend of the Crystal Skulls” details Walsh’s lengthy investigation into the origin and history of the skull, one that took her from ancient Mesoamerica to archives across Europe and the Americas. She also took it to the British Museum for examination under a scanning electron microscope, and comparison with the British Museum crystal skull as well as documented pre-Columbian Aztec and Mixtec rock crystal artifacts.

Crystal skulls began to gain notoriety in the wake of the fame of the so-called "Skull-of-Doom," also known as the Mitchell-Hedges skull, named after the adopted daughter of famed explorer Frederick Mitchell-Hedges. Anna Mitchell-Hedges claimed she discovered it at the foot of an ancient altar in the Central American rainforest of Belize in 1926. Until she died at age 100 in April 2007, she insisted the skull was an authentic artifact. In the film, psychic Carole Wilson "channels" the skull, from which she first channeled messages in 1982 and wrote about in a book.

Some believe in an ancient Mayan legend that tells of 13 crystal skulls bearing secret knowledge for humankind. In a time of great peril, says the legend, the skulls will come together and reveal information that can prevent doomsday.

But how to reveal the truth? Crystal skulls are perfectly designed to confound inquiries into their past. They are made of quartz crystal, which contains no carbon, the essential element in carbon-dating. With no ironclad way of confirming when exactly they were made, much less where, Walsh and her colleagues faced a formidable challenge in pitting science versus the supernatural.

"The Legend of the Crystal Skulls" applies modern technology and cutting edge science to test the possibilities of the claims about their origins and powers - and to uncover the truth behind the crystal skulls.

Smithsonian Channel's website (www.smithsonianchannel.com) contains detailed information about the most prominent crystal skulls that appear frequently in books and on the web. In addition, the July issue of *Smithsonian Magazine* contains an article about the Smithsonian crystal skull, and the May/June issue of *Archaeology* magazine (www.archaeology.org) features an article by Jane MacLaren Walsh. Smithsonian Channel in high definition is currently available to customers of DirecTV, Charter Communications, DISH Networks, Verizon and RCN.

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN NETWORKS

Smithsonian Networks (SN) is a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution. It was formed to create new channels to showcase scientific, cultural and historical programming based largely upon the assets of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. Smithsonian Channel features original documentaries, short-subject explorations and innovative and groundbreaking programs highlighting America's historical, cultural and scientific heritage. Visit Smithsonian Networks on the internet at www.smithsonianchannel.com

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