

Sharing Ideas™



NEWSMAGAZINE

Interview with Bill Thompson, USA TODAY-SKY RADIO Host

Revolutionary new USA TODAY-SKY RADIO, part of Gannett News Service, offers travelers in-flight live radio programs. United and Delta Airlines carry their programs, with many other airlines to follow. Their programming includes AP "Newspower," weather, entertainment, and CNN live sports in baseball, football, basketball and the Olympics, plus the resources of the Mutual Broadcasting Network. USA TODAY SKY RADIO makes their live in-flight and sports coverage exclusive and unique. It stems from a Ku-Band link upward to GSTAR 111 Ku-and Satellite, thru another Ku-Band link to especially equipped aircraft. We asked SKY RADIO host Bill Thompson to answer some questions for our "Sharing Ideas" society family.

Q. Bill, SKY RADIO is a magnificent dream come true. Who conceived the idea?

A. SKY RADIO is a skillful marriage of cutting-edge technology (the ability to send a high-fidelity radio signal live into a fast-moving object) and the journalistic talents of a couple of dozen seasoned professionals from all over the U.S. Technology came first. They had to be sure it could be done. Once that was clear, my bosses assembled this team of pros to actually execute the all-news format.

Q. How did you begin your radio career?

A. When I was 17 years old, and a high school senior in Ottawa, Illinois, I was an after-school disc jockey. I later switched to news. My career has taken me to stations in Illinois, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.

Q. Tell us some of the interesting people you have interviewed on your famous show for SKY RADIO?

A. Former Israeli ambassador Abba Eban, Michael Caine, Kirk Douglas, Alan Dershowitz, Penn Jillette, David McCullough, Anne Rice, Nelson DeMille, Susan Sontag, Jeff Davidson and Dottie Walters are just a small handful of the approximately 500 authors I interview each year.