

# "Boyuck" Ryan wins Small Businessperson Award

ANCHORAGE — Wilfred "Boyuck" Ryan, who piloted the family business from a tiny air-taxi service to become one of the most important commuter airlines

state's Small Businessperson of the Year, according to Frank Cox, District Director of the Small Business Administrator.

Ryan will meet with President Reagan in Washington, D.C., during Small Business Week, May 18-23, along with SBA honorees from each

of the other states. At that time the Small Business Administration will announce the national winner of the prestigious Small Businessperson of the Year award.

The SBA regards Ryan as an important figure in the pioneering and growth of the state of Alaska. As president of Ryan Air, he has overseen the gradual development of a comprehensive air taxi commuter service to over 70 destinations in rural Alaska. For many of those points, air taxis are

their only link with the rest of the world.

According to Cox, Ryan Air serves as a unifying force for the expansive Alaskan wilderness. Villages and towns stretching from Bethel to Kotzebue rely on Ryan and other air taxi carriers for supplies. "Giving people a service they can depend on is not just valuable — it's essential," said Ryan.

Friends and co-workers of "Boyuck," whose Inupiat nickname means first-born, or the eldest son, are quick to credit Ryan's years of dedication to the fledgling air service to build it into the industry leader of today. Ryan has worked in the family business since age 12. He began flying commercial craft during his junior year in high school, and received his pilot's license before he was licensed to drive a car. Ryan took over the business in 1977 upon the death of his father, Wilfred Sr., who began Unalakleet Air Taxi in 1959 with one single-engine aircraft.

Today, Ryan Air operates a fleet of 35 aircraft flying statewide, employs 225 people, and currently operates the only two Beechcraft 1900C commuter craft in Alaska.

Ryan, however, points to the caliber of his employees as the dominant fac-

tor in Ryan Air's success. "Ryan Air people take pride in their work, and they have a great deal of integrity," Ryan says proudly.

Aside from his one-year tenure as mayor of Unalakleet, where he was born and raised, Ryan has taken an active role in many other regional activities. He has served on the Norton Sound advisory board, was a member of the MediVac service to outlying villages, and has been active in local and state recreation programs, the Special Olympics, village education, and annually sponsors Iditarod participants. Ryan attended the Alaska Methodist University and Linfield (Oregon) College, with concentration in business administration.

The SBA, said Cox, honors Ryan as a cultural representative to Natives, rural Alaskans and other aspiring businesspeople.

Willie Hensley, Chairman of the Board of United Bank Alaska noted that Ryan's efforts transcend the operation of a successful airline. "He has tried and succeeded in melding the Eskimo and Western cultures in his approach to business — a combination of service and profit. The best results come from people who are respected both for their character and contributions."