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***Tribute to James H. Duncan, Principal Byrd High School  
Shreveport, Louisiana  
1955 to 1970***

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**Introduction**

As a result of attending a dinner of the Strategic Leadership Network of Washington, DC where Katherine Elberfeld spoke on the topic of Servant Leadership, I got back in touch with the qualities that made James H. Duncan an exceptional principal of Byrd High School during my years from 1966 to 1970. I wanted to list these qualities not only to express my personal gratitude to Mr. Duncan, but to provide a list of qualities that all leaders should seek to demonstrate in their lives. Since I graduated in 1970, I decided to stop at 70 qualities which he possessed that represent in my view the foundations of leadership.

I do not know what training Mr. Duncan received to develop these qualities, but I do know that leaders today would do well to have even half of these qualities under their belt. I think Mr. Duncan came close to demonstrating each of them on a regular basis. His leadership qualities were:

1. High energy, inspirational
2. Directness, yet personable
3. Clarity
4. Used words very carefully, not verbose
5. Presented himself as working for a cause
6. Lived what he preached
7. Set high standards/goals for himself and others
8. Had managerial talent and expertise and the ability to create and express vision
9. Cared for and was concerned about people
10. Nurturer
11. Creative
12. Had definiteness of purpose; clear about the "why"
13. Always believed he had a "clear shot" at the desired outcome or goal
14. Patient (calm and resolved), yet impatient (had a sense of urgency)
15. Motivator
16. Resourceful
17. Networker and team builder
18. Multi-tasker
19. Coach, more than a manager
20. Enabler of learning
21. Encouraged innovation
22. Encouraged teamwork and hard work
23. Led people more often than managed people
24. Loved to watch students and faculty grow and develop personally
25. Authentic
26. Inquiring
27. Learning
28. Humble, not arrogant
29. Very smart, maybe brilliant
30. Accepting of each person
31. Courageous
32. Spontaneous
33. Consensus gatherer
34. Appreciated differing points of view (to a point)
35. Made sure "his" success showed up as "your" success
36. Mentor
37. Facilitator of success
38. Thought in terms of models
39. Truthful, High Integrity, Honest
40. Logical
41. Not quick to claim credit for himself
42. Made sure he both heard and "listened to"
43. His main purpose of speaking was enrollment
44. Appreciated humor and knew how to use it
45. Acknowledged strengths of others
46. Valued others' contributions
47. Exceptional emotional and mental strength
48. Had a plan to achieve his goals
49. Sought out opportunities to lead
50. Willingness to listen
51. Ability to be non-judgmental
52. Was demanding of himself and others and never demeaning
53. Always had a positive attitude

54. Could give a label to an “impossible to define” subject to make it stick (for example “Byrd High Spirit”)
55. Had a commanding physical presence, aura
56. Could lead people in ‘guided discovery’ to help them lead, perform, excel
57. Saw that he had a duty to guide and lead people
58. Sought to involve many people in the development of processes and creating the action steps that would lead to success
59. Open and available for consultation
60. Talked to people in a way to help them become their “better self”
61. Loved what he did
62. Dedication
63. Person of strong faith
64. Person who knew that “faith trumps fear”
65. Inclusive of others
66. Self-confident
67. Focused on others and their performances

68. “We” oriented, rather than “I” oriented
69. Enthusiastic
70. Great, resonating voice

### ***Conclusion***

If you knew Mr. Duncan, you experienced him demonstrating many, if not all of these traits. For those who did not know James H. Duncan, I hope this list gives you some indication of key leadership traits for you to develop and deploy.

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### ***Biographical Information***

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