

# Would You Share this Three-Minute Read if You Thought it Might Save a Life?

*By Major General Craig Whelden, U.S. Army (retired)*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, February 14, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- I was saddened – but not at all surprised – to learn of William Moreau’s recent lawsuit against the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) charging their failure to attend to athletes’ mental health issues.

In a February 12, 2020 article the Washington Post uncovered what appears to be the latest dirty little secret for the USOC. (Remember Larry Nassar’s years of sexually assaulting female athletes?)

In the story, Michael Phelps – the winner of 23 Gold Medals –publicly reinforces Moreau’s message contending that the USOC cares more about winning medals than taking care of athletes.

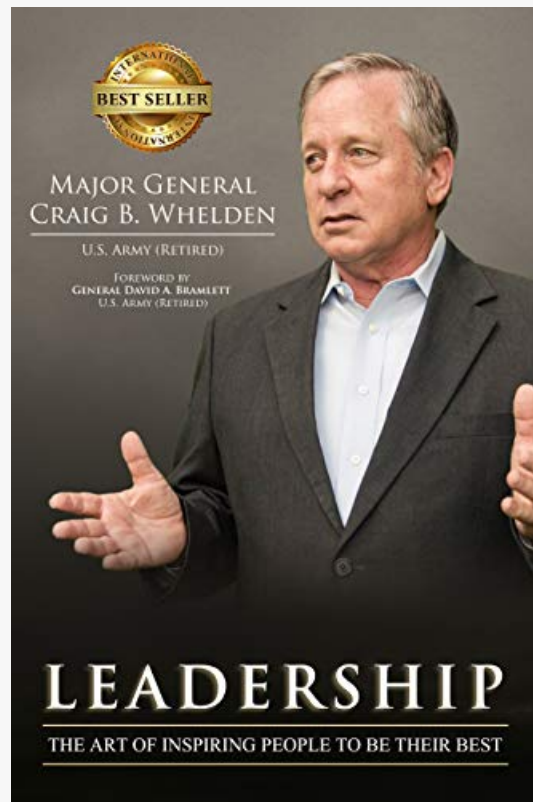
The article suggests the USOC “is a top down operation, with athletes at the bottom, fearful of speaking up. It’s a system that continues to be profoundly distrusted by the very champions it is supposed to serve.”

It also points out that suicide is a high risk with world class athletes and is the second-leading cause of death in people ages 15 to 24 – a group I have decades of experience with since that cohort includes many in the Armed Forces.

While serving as an Army General Officer and Marine Corps Senior Executive, rarely did a day pass that I didn’t see the report of a suicide, a suicide attempt, or a suicide ideation.



Major General Craig Whelden



Major General Craig Whelden, Established Author

Suicide devastated me personally when my sister took her life on Christmas Eve, 1999. So, I'm aware of the stressors that face young people when they can't see "The Light at the End of the Tunnel." (The title of Chapter 18 in my book in honor of my sister since these were the exact words used in her suicide note.)

In that same chapter, I shared another dark passage in my life. At 25, my marriage failed while serving as the battalion maintenance officer of a tank battalion at Fort Hood, Texas. I dealt with it by focusing my time and energy at work.

One Friday night while alone at my desk in the tank park, I walked the Brigade Commander.

"Lieutenant Whelden, let's take a stroll through the motor pool," he said.

"What a perfect storm of bad luck," I thought.

With my personal issues center-stage, this was not a good time to have the brigade commander (whom I'd never met) inspect the motor pool.

Colonel Jack Woodmansee walked with me up and down the tank line. He never mentioned the maintenance status of our tanks, the appearance of the motor pool, or even my personal issue. He only spoke about the challenges he had faced in his life and how he overcame them.

When we got back to the front gate, he put his hand on my shoulder and said "There's light at the end of this tunnel...you just can't see it yet." He wished me well and left.

Colonel Woodmansee was right. I did find the "light at the end of the tunnel." Within a year I met Karen Lusk – now my wife of 42 years. I can't imagine life turning out differently than it has – with two wonderful children and the finest grandson on the planet.

We all need a Jack Woodmansee in our life, a leader who retired as a 3-star general.

My sister took her life a month after her son left for the Marine Corps. I have no reason to believe there's any connection, but fast forward 20 years and I was his retiring official in August 2019 when he left as the most respected Chief Warrant Officer in his field in the entire Marine Corps.

He is happily married, has two wonderful boys, and is climbing a new ladder – at age 38 – in a whole new career. Even so, I'm now the one he reaches out to for that "hand-on-the-shoulder-moment" when needed. If my sister could have foreseen her son's success, would she have reconsidered on Christmas Eve of 1999? We'll never know.

There's light at the end of most tunnels. Help someone find their light, just as Colonel Woodmansee did for me over four decades ago, and I try to do with my nephew when he calls.

Be a leader.

Save a life.

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