

T.F.S.

Three, five, and seven

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#202

“How long is your cabletow? It’s as long as you want it to be. It will reach as far as your moral principles go, or your material conditions will allow.”---The Craft And Its Symbols ----Allen Roberts p. 14

The following article was written by Brother Shawn Carrick Montgomery Lodge #258 and Red Wing Lodge #8 and delivered in Lodge this year. He is a fine writer and is now a member of the Grand Lodge Writers Guild.

A Masons Cable Tow

As Masons we cheerfully agree to abide by our obligations and promises that we took at the altar in each degree. The cable tow is an integral symbol that is part of each degrees impact on the Mason’s conscience. We learn about the cable tow in the first degree and it is reinforced in each additional degree a Brother will experience. An important question about this singular item is how the cable tow has been defined by different sources, depending on their interpretation of the degree.

MasonicDictionary.com indicates that the cable tow “represents the candidates bond to his guide”. The Masonic Dictionary maintained by masonicworld.com indicates that the length of the cable tow is symbolically measured to be three miles in the early years to go to the relief of a brother in need but “in present time it is usually considered about forty miles.” These definitions are just words that an individual has made based on their personal beliefs and experiences.

In the early years, 1700’s up to mid 1900’s, most members of a lodge would live in close proximity to their Masonic Temple which would be consistent with a three mile cable tow. The lodge was an integral part of the local community and being able to attend Lodge Communications was



essential to Masons. In the present time, members are not solely from a specific town for the lodge they belong to, but rather they can many times be from surrounding communities, driving considerable distances to attend the different functions. They have chosen to be involved with a specific Lodge for a personal reason or a specific Lodge is involved in an activity that is of interest and importance to the Mason. To better understand the length of a cable tow, we must understand the give and take a cable tow experiences and what the cable tow represents.

A cable tow consists of two separate ends connected together by a cord. One end of the cable tow is representing the individual Mason while the other end is representing the Fraternity or Lodge. When examining the cable tow it is impossible to tell where one end starts and the other end begins. It is this fluid change that occurs while examining the cable tow from one end to another that sets Masonry apart from any other fraternal organization. The cable tow reminds each Mason of his obligations and promises to the lodge while at the same time representing the Lodge and the Fraternity's (Members of the Lodge) obligations to a Brother. How Masons fulfill their obligations differ based on their individual beliefs and interpretations.

What act or acts fulfills a Mason's obligations can vary greatly and may be as simple as a having a conversation with a brother or it could be more important and impacting such as providing emotional and even financial support of a Brother who is in need of assistance, or to the family of a brother who is called by the Grand Architect of the Universe to that house not made with hands...the celestial Lodge above.

It is important to remember that the length of a Mason's cable tow is ultimately set by the individual Mason and cannot be truly judged by any other individual. When three miles may be the proper length of a cable tow for one Mason, another Mason's cable tow may be hundreds or even thousands of miles in length. Each length is determined by the individual's moral principles, beliefs and their particular individual circumstances. Ultimately, a Mason will pass judgment on himself based on the aid they have provided to others, but more especially a Brother Mason. A quote I like that I believe is fitting when looking at your cable tow is:

*“When looking at the reflection in the mirror,
do you like what you see based on what you
have done and what you have not done?”*

Masonry is a progressive science that helps to take good men and make them better, but it is not the lodge alone that will help to make them better. Each Mason must work toward the goal of making himself better. By remembering our obligations and having a cable tow that is of

appropriate length for providing aid and relief, Masons, with the help of the Lodge, will succeed in becoming better men to their families and to their communities.

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

*“WE LIVE IN A HOUSE OF MIRRORS
AND THINK WE ARE LOOKING OUT THE WINDOWS.”*

~ FRITZ PERLS

“Obligations define us. As individuals, there are some obligations we are free to assume, or not. As members of a community, our obligations are shared, regardless”. ---Rabbi Jack A. Luxemburg

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, please send them to shapiro.stanley@gmail.com

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