

HOW LONG IS MY CABLE TOW?

W. Howard Coop

On December 23, 1952, I was introduced to a cable tow, and my first thought was: another piece of rope. But I soon learned that a cable tow is much more.

In words of Albert G. Mackey, the cable tow is “supposed to symbolize the covenant by which all Masons are tied.” Going farther, Mackay defined the length of a cable tow as “the scope of a man’s reasonable ability.”

How long is my cable tow? Is there a limit to the length of my cable tow? There have been many times when, in the daily performance of duty, those profound and searching questions hounded me. At those times, I faced demanding situations that required some response from me, and I wanted to know, and I needed to know, just what my responsibility was in those situations.

One morning as I worked at my desk the phone rang. When I answered it, a strange but pleasant voice greeted me by name and asked about my wellbeing. I was not the least bit surprised, for that happens often when solicitors for one cause or another call. Then, without hesitating, the caller gave me his name, and he went further. He identified himself, in ways that I understood, as a brother Mason, and he identified a familiar source from which he received my name and my phone number.

After a brief but very pleasant conversation, the man on the phone told me that he was on one of the U. S. Virgin Islands in the West Indies. Then, he said that he needed some assistance, and he asked, “Would you be kind enough to help me?”

For a brief moment, the paramount question in my mind was: Does my cable tow reach all the way from Lancaster, Kentucky to one of the U S. Virgin Islands in the West Indies to help a man about whom I had never heard? But I accepted as valid the identification he gave, and on the basis of what he said, I recognized him to be a brother Mason who, at that moment, needed my help. So, having the information he desired and needed, I, without a second thought, gave it to him.

The length of a cable tow is not determined by geographical distance. Rather, it is determined by the need of a brother Mason wherever he is and one’s ability to respond to that need.

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