

A Tale Of Three Tables

Thomas Icom - "Ticom" · July 18, 2026

The HOPE Conference is in a month, and as is typical I'm still working on putting together my talk. I working in the lab yesterday, and decided it needed to be cleaned and reconfigured. This is probably going to be cleanest and neatest my workbench is going to be in a long time:

It almost embarrasses me to share that picture because it's too neat and clean, and it looks like nothing gets fucking done there. That attitude/philosophy goes back to my early days in electronics when my boss at the TV shop told me that if a customer sees a workbench that is too neat, then they think the quality of work at the shop is poor since the shop doesn't look busy. Compare that pic to Dave Wildflower's old bench:

That's more like it.

There is also a third table that doesn't have a picture. It's in the dining room at 1866 House, and is the family's common location for working on things. About a third of the time I'm there; usually when I'm working on something that doesn't involve soldering or test equipment beyond a VOM meter. The other members of the fam have arts/crafts stuff they like to work on. Younger daughter has a band loom she spends a lot of time with, and does some coding. Older daughter grabs the precision screwdriver kit out of the tool/junk drawer to work on some retro toy she found at the antique store. *Most of the time the activities are offline.*

Now I'm mostly an RF/hardware hacker, but there are others. At [HOPE 12] (<https://xii.hope.net/>) they talked about [12 different types of hackers] (<https://xii.hope.net/dozen.html>). A lot of them involve IRL activities, and that's the important part.

You don't need a full-fledged dedicated workshop. You just need a flat surface where you can haul out your stuff and work on things. You can do it on the kitchen or dining room table when you're not eating. *You also need to just do it.*

It's 9AM on a Saturday morning. You might have the day off. You probably at least have a few hours to fuck around. Consider this time. You can spend your free time online doomscrolling, or you can shut the data off (someone can always text or call you if it's important) and **go do something in meatspace.**

Choice is yours. Always was. **What are you gonna do?**