

TURN YOUR CHRISTMAS 'INSIDE OUT'

Michael P. Kehs
Illustrations by Joseph Larkins

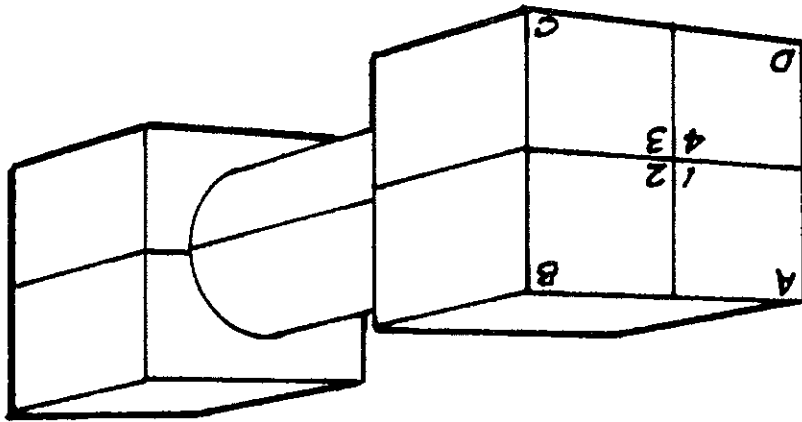


Figure 1a

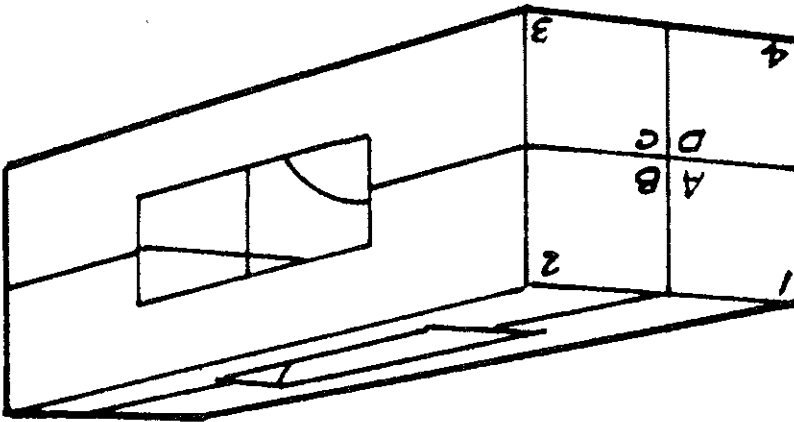


Figure 1b

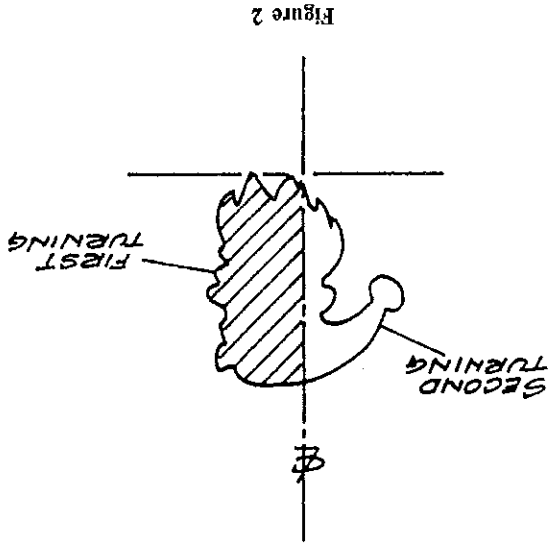


Figure 2

My first encounter with an inside-out turning was at a woodcarving show. It was a turning of a Christmas tree, and I was intrigued by this style of turning. That turning was a square block of wood with an open silhouette of a Christmas tree on each of its four sides. The inside had been turned and this turning defined the tree's outline.

What is an inside-out turning? It is a spindle turning with both ends left square which is then cut or separated into four pieces lengthwise. The four outside corners are rotated inward, resulting in four "windows" or silhouettes (figures 1a and 1b). The turned shape of the spindle dictates the shape of the silhouette and will produce a symmetrical pattern. An asymmetrical silhouette requires two different, but matched turnings.

Any outline drawing can be turned inside-out. Draw a center line through the design as shown in figure 2. I will be describing the process involved in turning a Santa Claus head inside-out (photos 1-5). The profile of Santa is asymmetrical, therefore, it will need to be made from two turnings. One will be the front profile or face, and the other will be the back profile.

Materials needed:

- 8 pieces of hardwood, 1 1/2-inches square by 8-inches long
- 2 shop-made wooden chucks that are recessed 1/4-inch deep and 3-inches square. Mount one recessed chuck on a faceplate and use the second at the tailstock end (figure 3).

Steps in turning:

1. Arrange four of the eight pieces into a 3-inch square by 8-inch long block. Do not glue.
2. Mark the top and bottom limits of the profile on the center of the work piece as in figure 4.
3. Place the four pieces into the wooden chucks on the lathe. A snug fit is best. In order for this process to be successful, the center of the recess in the chucks must be centered with the lathe spindle.
4. Scribe the top and bottom marks of the profile with a skew chisel.

5. Remove corners with a gouge between the scribed marks, leaving an almost round cylinder. Leave small flats on each side of the turning. 6. Mark the first prominent point from the top (figure 5). A = distance from top mark, B = depth of cut. 7. Cut to the proper depth with a parting tool or a narrow scraper (figure 6). To measure depth of cut, hold a straight edge on the flat side of the turning, measuring into the cut from that reference point. 8. Shape from scribeline to mark "A" with a gouge. 9. Repeat steps 6 through 8 for each prominent point. (It will be better to execute some cuts with specially shaped scrapers made from files, file tangs, tool steel, or old screwdrivers.) 10. After all points have been found and shaped, take one of the four pieces of the turning and hold it against your drawing to determine whether or not you need to remove more wood. 11. When you are satisfied, hold one finished piece against one of the pieces to be used for the second turning and mark the top and bottom limits of the design. 12. Repeat steps 3 through 10 for the back profile of the turning. Note: Turning the tassle on the Santa's cap is tricky and somewhat scary, but success without risk is not as sweet. Turning this requires a special scraper (figure 7). This tool has to be rotated into the wood. Start with the handle to the left. As the tip enters the wood, rotate the tool to the right until the handle is perpendicular to the lathe. Push the tool in and pull it out slightly and rotate it out to remove it from the turning (figure 8). 13. Take two quarters of the face turning and two quarters of the back of the head turning and glue up as shown in figure 9 and photo 4. 14. Now that Santa has come to life, put the glued-up block back into the lathe and turn the outside to your favorite shape. I have chosen the Christmas tree ball. This will be hung on our Christmas tree.

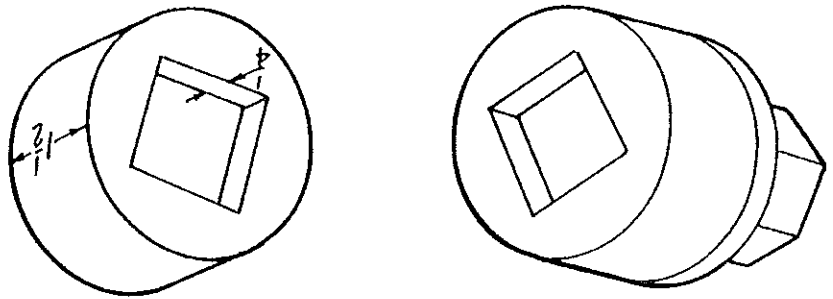


Figure 3

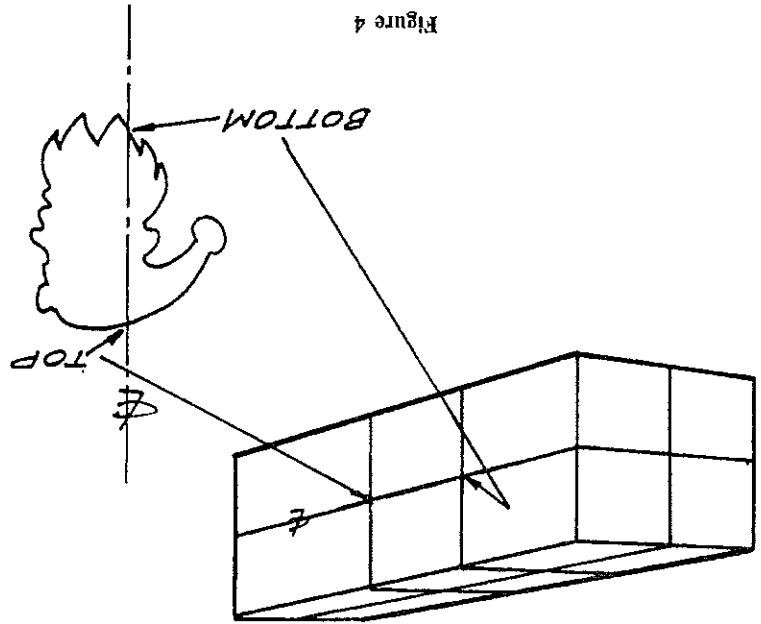


Figure 4

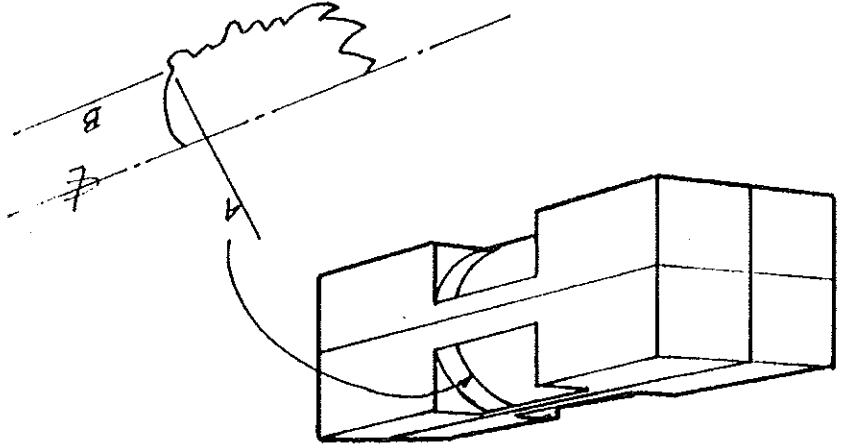


Figure 5

Photo 1. Santa face outlined, spindle turned.

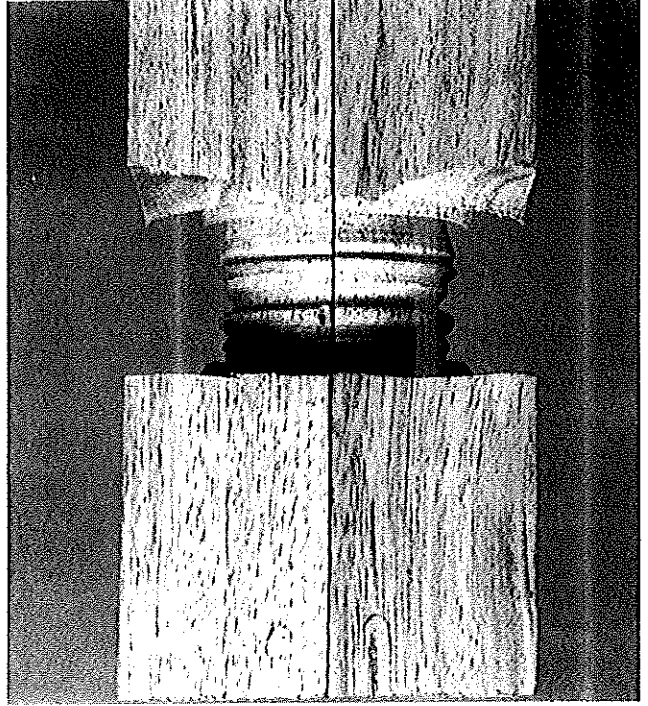


Photo 2. Santa cap outlined, spindle turned.

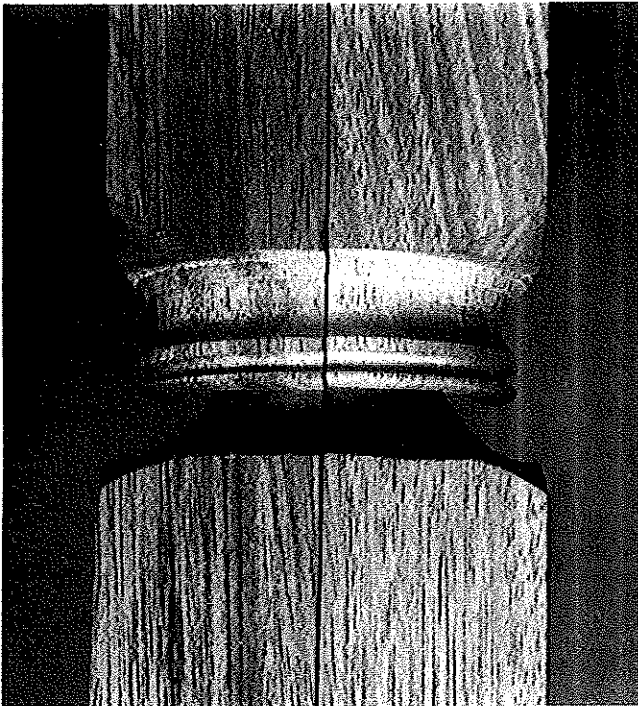


Figure 8

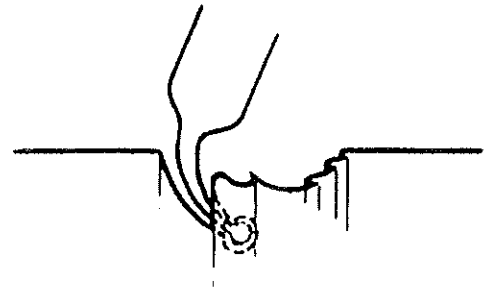


Figure 9

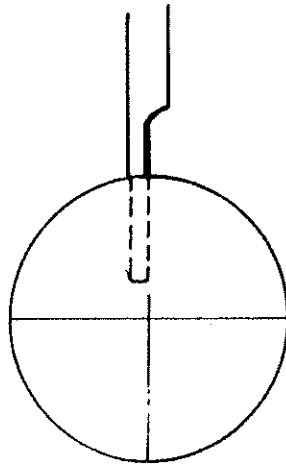
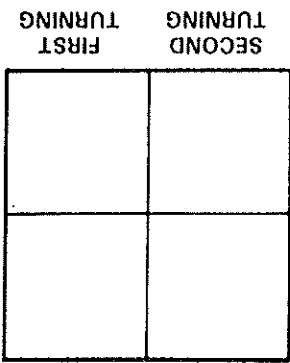


Figure 6

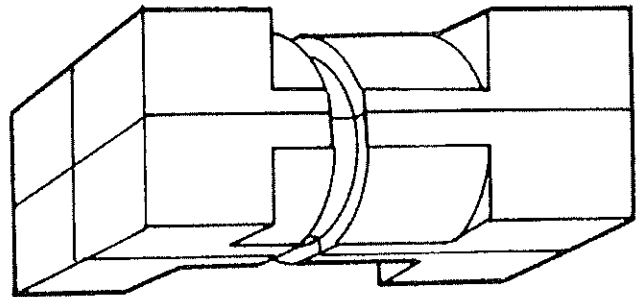
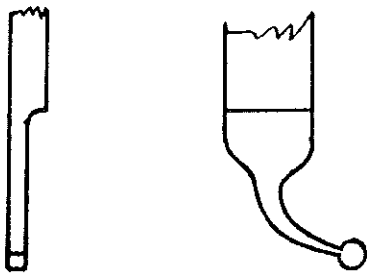


Figure 7



Mike Kehs is an enthusiastic woodturner and woodcarver from Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

The possibilities for inside out turnings are boundless. They range from the simple Christmas tree, star, or snowman, to the intricate details of a flower or outline of a nude, all the way to the more complex theme-turning entitled "An Inside Out Christmas" on the back cover of the Journal. Inside-out turnings will stimulate your ability to see shapes from the wood lathe in a new way as well as be a challenge to your skill, techniques, and design practice. Good luck as you try to turn "inside out." ☉

Photo 6. Side view of Kehs' "An Inside Out Christmas" pictured on back cover.

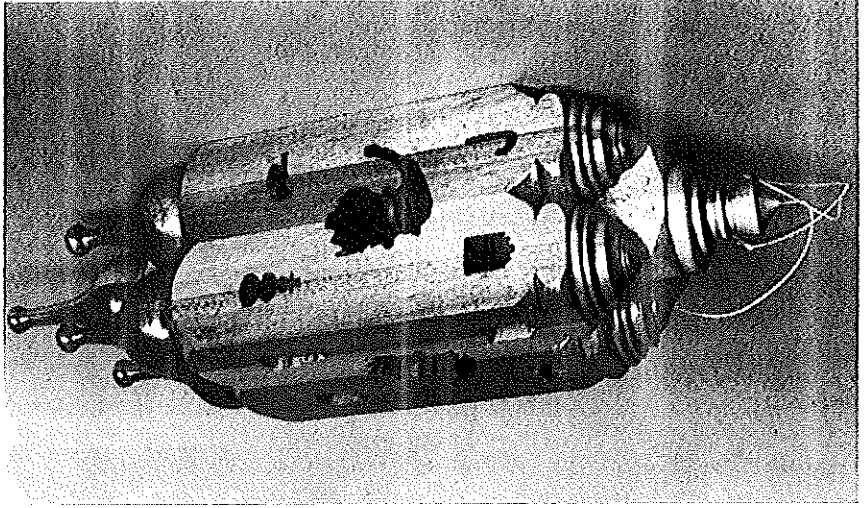


Photo 4. Santa head ready to glue together. Photo 5. Finished Santa head. Hollow tree ornament. Photo 9. Flower decoration.

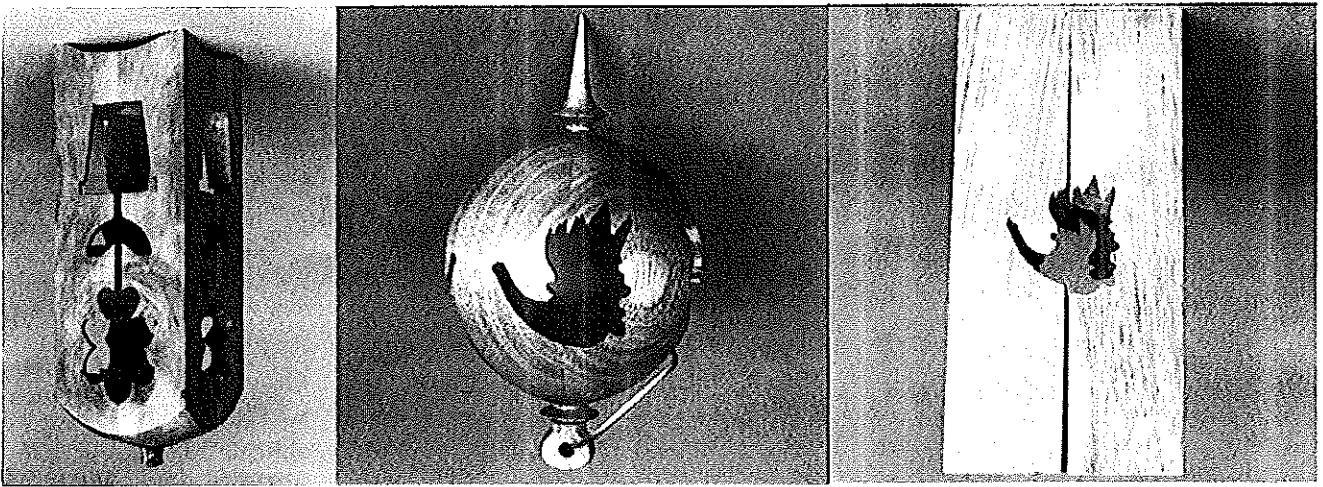


Photo 3. Santa head silhouette, face and cap spindle turned. Photo 7. Inside-out nude, spindle turned side. Photo 8. Nude silhouette.

