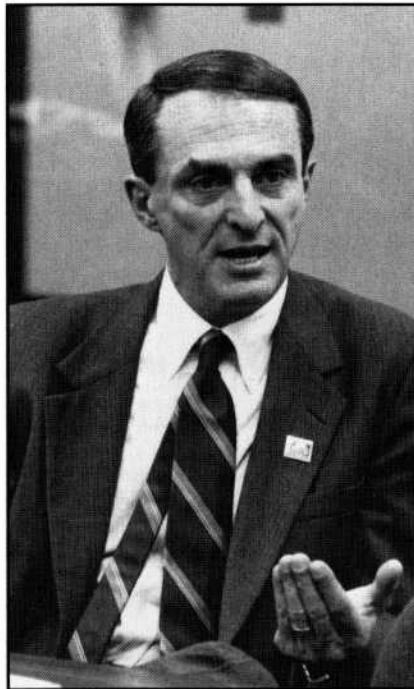

Steve Janger:

CLOSE UP & PERSONAL

**America's largest civic education program
is an OU graduate's attempt to prove
to the nation's young people that democracy
is flexible, changeable and can serve their needs.**

by Carol J. Burr



Gil Jain

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The year was 1970—a difficult time to be young and American. Vietnam. Cambodia. Kent State. The national conscience was taking a beating; a generation was at risk.

A Washington, D.C.-based Oklahoman named Stephen A. Janger, OU Class of 1959, took a look around and didn't like what he saw. The "anti" feeling had taken over. What had started as primarily anti-war had become something much larger—anti-education, anti-business, anti-establishment—with a pervading contempt for the democratic process of government.

"I wasn't an expert on the democratic process," he admits, "but I knew that showing contempt for something before you really understood it was not a very smart thing to do."

Janger thought he could show young people that the best way to bring about change is to understand the system. "American government is changeable," he insists. "That's the beauty. If you don't like it, you can change it. But you can't do it by spitting at it; you can't do it by disdain or by ignoring it—because the system will function without you."

Out of this desire to reclaim America's youth came the Close Up Foundation, a public non-profit, tax-exempt organization founded by Janger, his wife Kathie and brother Stanford "Chipsy" Janger. The idea was simple enough in the beginning: bring high school students to the nation's capital for a truly intense week to see "close up" how their government works. That first program week the Jangers and seven other employees raised funds, arranged seminars with Washington insiders, conducted workshops—all for 25 students and teachers recruited from high schools around the country and housed in a few rooms in a single hotel.

That was more than 20 years and 315,000 participants ago. Today the Close Up Washington Program annually requires seven metropolitan hotels to house the some 25,000 students and teachers representing all 50 states, the American territories and two dozen countries. Kathie and Chipsy retired from Close Up in 1975, their functions, many times multiplied, now performed by 340 employees in administration,

community outreach, curriculum and instruction, finance, government relations, office services, program development, program services, publications, television programming and transportation.

Steve Janger, a touch of gray added at the temples, more laugh lines around the eyes, remains as Close Up's president and guiding spirit. Presiding over an increasingly complex organization dedicated to pursuing new challenges with each new year has done nothing to dim his enthusiasm. Although he travels almost constantly drumming up new markets for civic education and finding the funds to feed the \$34 million budget he has created, his major frustration seems to lie in his compulsion to reach more and more constituencies.

From the original Washington pro-

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gram, Close Up has branched out into state, local and international civic learning programs; publications; television and video programming; the Citizen Bee competition; and the Civic Achievement Award for elementary and middle school students. Special programs have been developed for the hearing, visually and orthopedically handicapped; adjudicated delinquent youth; status offenders and victims of abuse or neglect; older Americans; new Americans; and migrant schoolchildren.

Any temptation Janger legitimately might have to gloat over Close Up's successes is quickly dispelled by memories of the difficulties of the early years. The task of designing a civic studies program, convincing government and school officials of its validity and handling the logistics was daunt-

ing enough. Janger also had to find a way to make Close Up available to the full range of American youth.

Before Close Up, Steve, Kathie and Chipsy had organized a firm that arranged summer study programs in Europe for high school students. "Close Up couldn't be just for the kind of upper-middle income student we had been taking to Europe," Janger says. "It had to be for every kind, every color, every income level."

To accomplish his purpose, Janger needed a lot of free advice, so he went to people with the expertise to help him put a non-profit organization together, people he trusted and who trusted him, people who shared his beliefs and who would stick with the program. It was the beginning of Close Up's Oklahoma connection.

Most of the 13-member Board of Directors have been with Close Up since the beginning; five are University of Oklahoma graduates. In addition to Janger, the Sooner directors are attorneys Max N. Berry and Joel Jankowsky of Washington, Thomas J. Kenan of Oklahoma City and J. Gordon Zuber of Houston. The first and only secretary and general counsel to the board is OU alumnus Bradley G. McDonald.

"We were starting an organization with the potential for great growth," Janger explains, "but also some potential liability for the Board of Directors if things didn't go correctly. So you go to people who know you. You may have to talk to them about the idea, but you don't have to talk to them about yourself."

The members of this non-compensated board have devoted an inordinate amount of time to Close Up over the past two decades. Understandably they take great personal pride in the organization's present status as the largest and most comprehensive civic education organization in the country.

Chairman Richard J. Sideman is one of three Californians on the board, with Jill Shapiro and former Olympic decathlon champion Rafer Johnson. Brian Stone, from North Carolina, and Washingtonians Ronald B. Natalie, James P. McAleer, Margery Kraus and Charlie McBride round out the membership.

In addition, Close Up has a Board of Advisors that reads like "Who's Who's

in the Nation's Capital," plus officials of state governments, state and local school superintendents, journalists and national association executives. The list of corporate sponsors is equally impressive.

Of all the endorsements Close Up has received, none has been more meaningful than that of one of its earliest backers, the late president pro tem of the U.S. Senate, Allen J. Ellender. At his death, Congress established the Allen J. Ellender Fellowships to enable students in need and teachers to participate in the Close Up Washington Program. Supported by every Congress since 1972, the fellowship appropriation has grown from \$500,000 to nearly \$4.5 million.

The Ellender fellowships, however, cover only 60 percent of the cost of the Washington experience for the student recipients. The balance of the expenses must come from the home community. In most cities, the students and their sponsors, with help from the Close Up staff, spend the better part of the year raising the funds to send the high school's delegation to the nation's capital.

Community involvement is a key element in all Close Up programs. In Oklahoma, for example, major support over the years has come from the Kerr Foundation, Mapco Inc., R.J.R. Nabisco, the Shell Oil Company Foundation and

Burger King Corporation. Southwestern Bell Telephone coordinates the Citizen Bee program for the entire state with strong backing from *The Daily Oklahoman*, the State Department of Education and a host of additional Oklahoma entities.

Janger's Oklahoma connections show up in support for Close Up in other states as well. Conoco for many years was one of the largest corporate sponsors of the organization. "A good company," Janger says, "and the person in Houston who initially had a big impact on their giving program was a Sooner."

High school students from throughout the country and abroad who are fortunate enough to participate in the Washington program also feel the Oklahoma influence. Members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation always have been among Close Up's most active participants.

"In the early years, when I was in town more often, I might introduce 300 different speakers," Janger says. "Congressmen, senators, some cabinet members, justices of the court, media representatives, lobbyists, CEOs, agency people, White House staff and even the President, once in a great while. I love to watch the way they deal with young people—and I have my own measuring standard.

"There is so much good these

speakers can do," Janger contends. "They have the opportunity to send those young people away babbling about whether they agree or disagree with the opinions expressed. I don't care whether the speakers are conservatives or liberals, Democrats or Republicans—just so long as they make the kids think."

The Oklahoma delegation receives high marks from Janger, who notes that each member has his own style with the students and teachers. "They are all very good with young people," he says, "extremely supportive of our work, and I take special pride when I have an opportunity to introduce them."

Janger is firm in his insistence that Close Up has no political bias, but he does not claim that the program is non-partisan. "Close Up is a *multi*-partisan program," he explains, "because Washington is a multi-partisan town. Everyone has a point of view, but we do present enough points of view to give young people a balance."

But the young people are just one part of the Close Up equation. While the students are experiencing Washington through their study sessions, the teachers who accompany them are recharging their professional batteries in a parallel program.

"We take care of the students when they get to Washington," Janger says. "The teacher isn't here to chaperon."

In November 1958, Olympic decathlon champion Rafer Johnson, left, visited OU at the invitation of Steve Janger, right, whom he had met at the Pi Lambda Phi international convention. Johnson vanquished the Sooners at arm wrestling, including Sam Esterkyn and Jerry Zitterman, center, who with Janger and Larry Cohan formed the popular fraternity quartet, The Four Lams. More than a decade later, Janger recruited Johnson for the Close Up Board of Advisors and later the Board of Directors.



Instead, Close Up hopes to provide the educators with a renewed sense of commitment to and enthusiasm for their work. The numbers alone speak to the impact on educators. Since 1971 more than 30,000 classroom teachers and 4,200 educational administrators, including school district and state social studies supervisors, directors of secondary education, district and state superintendents and school board members have participated.

The important aspect of the professional development program is its multiplier effect. Close Up estimates that the average teacher reaches 125 students annually, and the influence of the typical administrator can extend much further.

An interesting variation on the teacher program during the past summer had a decidedly Oklahoma twist. The Close Up Foundation and the University of Oklahoma's Sarkey's Energy Center co-sponsored "Energy, the Environment and the Policy Choices Ahead," a landmark 10-day special training institute for educators on the interdisciplinary teaching of government, science and energy issues.

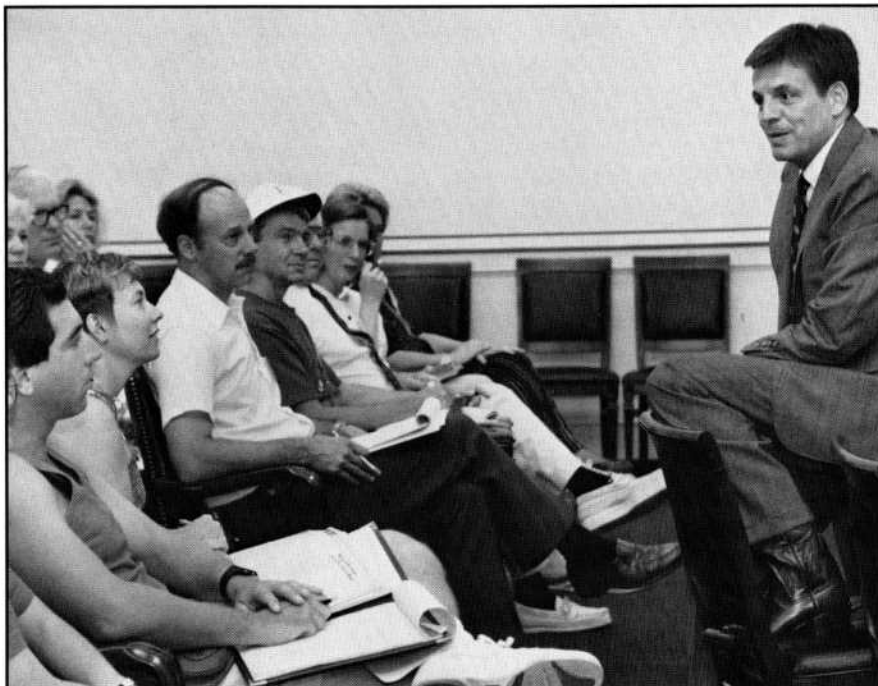
Teachers from all over the United States came to the Norman campus for the first five days of the science and technology-based seminars designed by then-Energy Center Director Barnet Groten. The second segment, focusing on policy issues, was held in Washington.

As successful as all the Washington programs have been, Close Up staffers have become increasingly aware that ultimately they must take their gospel to Americans where they live. As Janger says, "We can't bring 20 million high school students to Washington."

But Close Up veterans can take their Washington experiences home and translate them into local, state and even international programs.

"It's very hard to get involved in national politics at the age of 16 or 17," Janger reasons. "Yet where is the romance? Where are the glamour issues, the big names? They're all here in Washington. But the laws that affect young people the most are made on the local level.

"We hope that young people who come to Washington get so enthusiastic about their own ability to make a



Oklahoma Congressman Mike Synar, a long-time Close Up Foundation supporter, speaks to teachers participating in the Washington phase of "Energy, the Environment and the Policy Choices Ahead," an interdisciplinary program co-sponsored by OU's Sarkey's Energy Center, host of the science/technology sessions held in Norman.



The Oklahoma delegation always has been among Close Up's strongest backers. Here Congressman Mickey Edwards meets with a group of Oklahoma City high school students who were participants in the Washington-based civic education program.



University of Oklahoma graduates have formed a nucleus for Close Up's boards since the beginning. In addition to Steve Janger, left, Max N. Berry and Bradley McDonald, above, directors include Joel Jankowsky, Thomas J. Kenan and J. Gordon Zuber.

difference that they will take that enthusiasm home and put it to work in their own communities."

The first Close Up "local" program began in Atlanta in 1974. By 1990-91 there were more than 80,000 students and teachers involved in some 200 local and state Close Up programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada and many Pacific Islands.

For state program efforts, a Close Up staffer serves as liaison with each state's steering committee, approving budgets and materials to ensure a balanced presentation. However, each state's program is different and locally determined. Rhode Island has had an eight-week residential program for ninth and 10th graders; northern and southern California each have two-day programs for 250 students in Sacramento; Alaska's legislature appropriates funding to bring students from every school district to Juneau.

Oklahoma's broad-based volunteer steering committee runs a three-day

program in Oklahoma City involving state and local officials, the media and lobbyists. Again, Janger's relationship with this group is special.

"We help them raise a little money, as we do with all the states," he says, "but it is the spirit of the Oklahoma teachers that really makes me want to be a part of it. I can't get to many local or state programs, but I never miss the one in Oklahoma."

Internationally, Close Up brings students from overseas schools to Washington, sponsors foreign exchange programs and conducts conferences and other activities on site. Janger is particularly proud of the work being done in the Pacific Islands, whose important U.S. ties date from World War II. Congress was sufficiently impressed to designate funding for students and teachers in the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Marshall Islands and the U.S. territories of Guam and American Samoa.

Close Up also is focusing its efforts

on groups of people with special interests and concerns. First among them was the over-50 generation. Devising a curriculum in conjunction with the staff of the American Association of Retired Persons, Close Up in 1984 began bringing senior citizens to Washington and Williamsburg, 750 in 1990-91 alone, some for intergenerational sessions linking older Americans with students.

Last May Close Up joined with 14 national aging organizations to conduct the National Leadership Issues Forum, drawing 160 people from 40 states to Washington for a week of networking, leadership skills development and current issues briefings. Close Up also worked with the Congress to conduct the annual Congressional Senior Intern Program in which 141 participants spent a week learning about the legislative process and working in congressional offices. One of the first to be appointed was OU professor emeritus of journalism and *Sooner Magazine* contributor Louise B. Moore, who interned in the office of Oklahoma Senator David L. Boren.

While older Americans were refurbishing their citizenship skills, Close Up's New Americans Program was working with 1,200 10th and 11th graders both in Washington and in home communities. The New Americans, representing 70 different nationalities, focused on understanding the workings of the national government and the meaning of the U.S. Constitution, with later application of civic skills to community service projects.

Another aspect of the New Americans Program targets the children of migrant workers, many of whom might attend schools in six different states in a single year.

"There are 600,000 migrant students in the Department of Education computer—and possibly an equal number who are not registered—not accounted for," Janger says. "They are principally Hispanic in California, Texas and Florida, but the fishing industry brings many Portuguese to New England. They are very family oriented and want their children to get ahead, but practically speaking, many have no home base since they're constantly moving with the growing seasons."

Responding to an unmet need is

standard operating procedure for Close Up. The Civic Achievement Award Program (CAAP) was in answer to a series of discussions with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and a request to "do something" for elementary and middle school students.

CAAP recognizes students in the fifth through eighth grades, the so-called "gateway years" in education. The award has three components: mastery of information, a library research project and skill development in a community service project. Nearly one million students participated in CAAP during the 1990-91 academic year.

Originally the Civic Achievement program was funded by the Congress in honor of the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, then expanded with the help of Burger King Corporation. Burger King officials were so pleased with the positive feedback from their participation that they offered to sponsor the entire project.

"When we told Congress that we were withdrawing our reauthorization request," Janger recalls with a smile, "we were told, 'Well, that's a first.'"

The Citizen Bee is a civic learning competition first developed locally in Michigan and taken to the national level by Close Up in 1985. During this current academic year, the Citizen Bee will include more than 175,000 ninth through 12th graders in 350 regional and 50 state competitions. Prizes range from savings bonds for state winners to substantial scholarship awards for national finalists and winners.

The competition itself is for the more disciplined student, and getting through the comprehensive study manual is an accomplishment in itself. However, a separate teacher's guide has expanded the adaptability of the text for wider classroom use beyond the competition.

The publications program is one of the fastest growing and most exciting



On occasion, Close Up's schedule of speakers for its Washington program ranges all the way to the President of the United States. At top, President Ronald Reagan signs autographs following a Close Up tele-conference. At bottom, the students have the opportunity to question President George Bush.

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Steve Janger, right, hosts one of more than 1,000 C-Span telecasts developed by Close Up as the cable public affairs network's only independent producer of programming since 1979.

Janger, right, congratulates Melinda Simmons, a high school senior from Chanute, Kansas, winner of the first Citizen Bee final, held in 1986 at the Smithsonian Institution.

aspects of the Close Up operation. Although the books and manuals are developed primarily for program participants, educators tell Janger that the material is as good as or better than anything being published for secondary education in the country today. During the academic year 1990-91, tens of thousands of Close Up books and videotapes were used in schools and libraries nationally and internationally.

Civic education television programming for high school students and teachers also is expanding Close Up's outreach. Through a partnership with the nonprofit Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) developed in 1979, Close Up is the network's only independent producer of programming. More than 1,000 Close Up telecasts via C-SPAN have linked students and classrooms throughout the country with national and international officials. These public affairs telecasts have

also allowed cable viewers the opportunity to observe first hand the challenging dialogue among young Americans, their educators and those directly involved in the formulation of public policy.

While Close Up has been growing and changing for more than two decades, Steve Janger has remained remarkably the same. He wears middle age well, still the trim, good-looking baritone from The Four Lams, the popular fraternity quartet that brought him campus fame. His classmates of the '50s considered him one of their more polished and sophisticated colleagues; he still is.

His adult lifetime has been spent in the world's most fascinating city, yet "home" is Oklahoma. He returns as often as he can. His three children summer with his parents in Oklahoma City. His closest friends are those he made at OU, and their annual reunions during Dallas Weekend are treasured

times of laughter and "lying to each other about the way things were;" the football game is secondary.

"I liked those days so much," he admits, "that I'm not eager to replace them. Everyone I know in Washington understands my feelings about the University of Oklahoma."

But if Janger is nostalgic about the past, he is very realistic about the future. He knows that America cannot afford another lost generation. Such a possibility alarmed him in 1970, and it alarms him today.

Janger and his colleagues created Close Up to prove to the nation's young people that by understanding the democratic system they can make it work for them. The goal hasn't changed.

"It's still what makes you want to get up and go to work every day after 20 years of doing this job," Janger says simply, "because you think you can make a difference." 