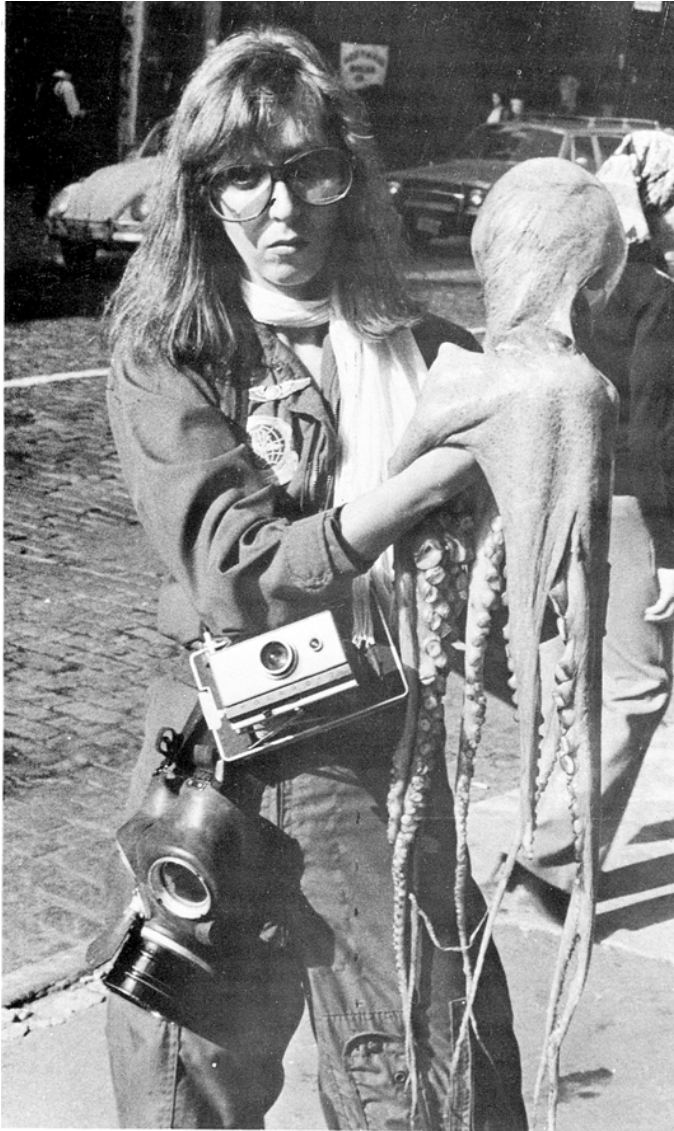


Ozzie and Tanya



As Tanya took up her position at the corner of Haight and Ashbury Streets, she was filled with both pride and trepidation. Pride because she was the latest in a long line of celebrated San Francisco street performers: her great grandfather, Chauncey, had introduced bagpipes to the Bay Area; her grandma Moses had been a skilled portrait painter; Mother was still a formidable stream of consciousness slam poet; older sister Blanche wowed the crowds with her amazing feats of funambulism until she finally got to the end of her rope. But Tanya was fearful for the same reason – she had quite the legacy to uphold. Already an inquisitive crowd familiar with the Hackendorfer family cachet had gathered expectantly around her. Taking a deep breath, she reached into her satchel and withdrew ... Ozzie! “Hi, I’m Ozzie the Octopus,” she ventriloquized through gritted teeth. “Who are you?!” “Oh, I’m ...” Tanya began, then realized she was using the same squeaky voice. “I’m your friend, Tanya! My, what *long* legs you have, Ozzie. Are you a dancer? Heh-heh!” But the crowd didn’t laugh along with her. In fact, a few people began to edge away. “Uh, can I, can I take your picture?” Tanya reached for the camera strung around her neck but quickly realized she couldn’t operate it while simultaneously holding the octopus. “Oh, never mind. Hey, Ozzie! What say we sing a duet for all these nice people!” Tanya began to hum while yanking the puppet’s mouth up and down. By all accounts, it was embarrassingly awful street theater, and the rest of her audience soon drifted away. Tanya was at a loss. What had gone wrong? “*I tol’ ya. You* was supposed to be da dummy,” said Ozzie, wagging one tentacle reproachfully. “Now next time, I’m in charge, see?” When Tanya didn’t answer right away, Ozzie blew a putrid inkfart on her. “Hey, you listenin’ ta me?!” Startled, Tanya sadly nodded. Ozzie controlled the rest of her life. He might as well run the street show, too.