

Dr. Rolf came to The Esalen Institute in summer, 1967, to work with Dr. Fritz Perls, the originator of Gestalt Therapy. At the same time she also began working with many other people residing at or visiting Esalen, including myself. As early as 1968, when I was trained, we were referring to her work as 'Rolfing.' After September, 1968, I was the only 'Rolfer' at Esalen, and I called it 'Rolfing.' I gave workshops at Esalen about once a month, and the description of some of those workshops included the word 'Rolfing.'

'Rolfing' became famous along with Gestalt Therapy, and various consciousness trainings, such as Arica, EST, and Rajneesh, recommended it highly. All the practitioners, and all the clients who sought it out, called it 'Rolfing.'

It was only after the formation of the Rolf Institute in 1972 that there was an attempt to limit the use of the word 'Rolfing.' Even then, those of us who had been trained before 1972 were allowed to use the word, even those like myself who did not join the Rolf Institute. In 1977, in my last encounter with Dr. Rolf, she asked if I were still 'Rolfing.'

Since 1980 I have taught the work in the Institute of Psycho-Structural Balancing (aka the International Professional School of Bodywork) in San Diego, California. Although I am a 'Rolfer' practicing 'Rolfing,' I teach the 'Rolf Method of Structural Integration' to my students, to avoid conflict with the Rolf Institute. My students cannot call their work 'Rolfing.' This is not an onerous restriction, but it illustrates the absurdity of the situation.

The words 'Rolfer' and 'Rolf' are not owned by the Rolf Institute in the United States, hence my students can refer to themselves as 'Rolfers' practicing the 'Rolf Method.'

Dr. Rolf did not intend for 'Rolfing' to be used by only one school.

Part of the legal agreement which Dr. Rolf executed to convey the work, and the servicemark 'Rolfing', to the Rolf Institute obligated the Institute to include other schools teaching the work under its umbrella. There was to be a fine paid to her heirs if this was not done. It was not done, and the present conflictual situation is one of the results.

Ownership of 'Rolfing' by the Rolf Institute has had deleterious effects on the profession.

There was a split in 1988 in which certain of the older teachers left the Rolf Institute and formed the Guild for Structural Integration. There was a lawsuit resulting, I am told, in the Guild not being able to use 'Rolfing.' I think this was a seminal disaster for the entire profession, dividing it into conflicting parties unable to promote the field together or to pursue common goals.

Ownership of the service mark leads to absurd outcomes.

I read in the Rolf Forum, an email list of Rolf Institute members (plus myself as an 'Emeritus Rolfer'), that, as the Rolf Institute heightens its defenses against loss of the service mark, 'Rolfing,' their lawyers have advised that 'Rolfing' can only be an adjective, as in "Rolfing(sm) Structural Integration."

In my opinion,

1. the term is generic and should never have been 'owned' by the Rolf Institute.
2. the Rolf Institute has misused their 'ownership' to restrict the ability of other schools teaching from the same lineage to refer to their work with publicly known terminology.
3. by implying that theirs is the only 'true' source of the work, the Rolf Institute has competed unfairly against other schools.
4. 'Rolfing' has always been a noun, referring to work done by students in the lineage of Dr. Ida Rolf.