

My Training Experience at Front Sight

Contributed by Administrator
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Before I get into my experience at the two courses I took at Front Sight Firearms Institute, I wanted to write about how I got to the point of making a decision to sign up as a life member and attend my first course.

I would say that I grew up around guns. My father was in the Navy his whole life and had quite a few handguns and rifles. I grew up in New Orleans but we also had some land in Hillsdale, MS. We would shoot pretty much every time we went up there. Some of the guns that are embedded in my memory are the little .25 Beretta, Colt Frontier Scout .22 and a Taurus 92. Our father always taught us to put safety first and how to properly handle and shoot whatever it was we were shooting at the time. I thought I was a bit more experienced with guns than some of my other friends and people my age. Then I went into the Army National Guard. We shot a good bit in boot camp and I did pretty well. When I got home we shot maybe once a year.

Since then I never really thought about buying a gun for myself. In the past couple years, I was starting to get an itch to get a gun. I finally had to scratch it and this past November I purchased my first gun, a Beretta 90-two .40. I didn't do a whole lot of research. I knew I wanted a Beretta in a .40; saw they had this new model that looked pretty nice...SOLD!

Then I started reading some gun magazines and started surfing more and more firearm related websites. I got some information on obtaining a CCW permit and took the class. That's when I bought my next gun, a Beretta .32 Tomcat for a backup gun. I wanted a smaller gun to conceal and "had" to buy it that day because I wanted to get it listed on my permit with the other one. This is about the time I started realizing I didn't know as much about guns as I thought.

I had heard about Front Sight from a friend at work whose girlfriend had attended a course. I checked it out and thought how cool it would be to take some classes but didn't give it much thought. I guess I figured I didn't have the time or the money. But I did sign up for the free 15 Gun Training Reports that Ignatius Piazza sends out. As I got these reports, I saw that there was some really good information he was sending out. It had its marketing blurbs but the information in the emails was worth.

By the end of the 15 reports, I think I was a bit more interested in attending classes because of the great information they were giving out. I remember thinking if an email newsletter is this good then the actual training must be outstanding, right?

Then I received the Front Sight Legacy DVD in the mail. I didn't watch it right away but once I did, I was glad I took the time to watch it. Not only is it a training institute but Ignatius also explains the Front Sight Purpose: To POSITIVELY change the image of gun ownership in our lifetime. And I have to say, I was ready to purchase a lifetime membership right then and there. I called the next day and signed up as a Legacy Lifetime Member and managed to get another free membership to give to someone as a Bonus. I also scheduled my first courses, a 2-Day Defensive Handgun Course and a 4-Day Defensive Handgun Course.

The day came to attend the 2-Day course and I just couldn't wait to get there and see what Front Sight was all about. I was expecting more of a "bootcamp-ish" feel to it but I was way off. I left my house in Las Vegas heading to Front Sight. It was a pretty easy drive which Google Maps said to be about an hour and fifteen minutes away. I'm a freak about getting to places early so it wound up taking me about 45 minutes to get there and I was about an hour early. When I arrived the gates were still locked. So I just waited out until 7AM when someone came around and opened the gates. A Front Sight staff member greeted me, found out which class I was attending, and directed me to the parking area. I also got a paper listing what I needed to bring up to the check-in area. They basically just check out your firearm, gear and ammo and then assign you to a range.

They had a lecture for about an hour that contains the welcome information, a little about Front Sight and an explanation of the different levels of competence among people. I'll say this right now; EVERY lecture that I have sat through

was VERY informative. You may think lecture equals boring but they all had my attention and I learned a great deal from every one.

Next, we were on the range and introduced to the Range Master and other Instructors. My instructor for both courses was Mr. Bishop. He is a retired Army Master Sergeant and sounds like one but has a great sense of humor. They started off with safety which is always #1. Then they group you up with another person and there are two firing relays. You are either on the line (dry) firing or behind that person coaching them. Everyone is responsible for each other's safety on the range. When you are coaching you are watching the other person to make sure they are handling their weapon properly and also to help them with the technique on which you are currently working. I think this is a great way to train because as I could see, everyone there was ready to learn and help the next person learn as well. I noticed this in my 4-Day course as I already knew how they ran the range as well as how to present properly. So I think I was able to help my partner with certain techniques better from the beginning. A couple of people did notice and asked if I'd been there before. They say that after taking a course there that people will notice how you handle your weapon, how you're presenting perfectly at the range, etc. That's true; I noticed this at my range last weekend. Another point I'll add here is that I practiced between courses and dry practice is definitely key. I noticed a BIG difference in my performance on my 4-Day course. And that's with just about fifteen to twenty minutes a day of dry practice.

While you are on the range usually you'll practice a technique dry first a few times and then with live rounds. The targets you are shooting are an average of a few thousand x-rays Ignatius Piazza took during his chiropractic career to give a target of the average person. The targets are also setup on a turning target system that the instructors can control manually or have it setup on timers. We did use some targets that had real people printed on them with weapons in their hands but most of the time we used the silhouette targets that you can see in some of the pictures.

During lunch, you can either eat outside or inside the lecture hall. They either play the Front Sight Story DVD, talk about membership options or some other really good lectures such as how to select a proper defensive handgun and another called Reality of the Streets. Some of the real-life video they showed in the last lecture really makes you realize what kind of things can happen out there. It definitely made me feel like I made the right decision to attend Front Sight to further my firearms training. As I said, I have my CCW so I believe I should have as much training as possible with that weapon I carry every day.

After lunch, you either have to attend another lecture if you are attending for the first time or you practice on certain techniques while the others are in the lecture. I almost wanted to attend the lectures again on my 4-Day course because they were so good but decided the practice would be better.

Some of the things they taught were how to properly present from a holster and fire 2 shots to the thoracic area, how to deliver necessary shots to the cranial-ocular cavity for situations such as a failure to stop or a hostage situation. You may think, "Hostage situation???" If someone had one of you loved ones in front of them with a gun to their head, wouldn't you like to know that you could deliver a guaranteed stopping shot to end the threat to your loved one and yourself? I would! I won't say that I am 100% after taking the two courses but with practice I can see that I can get to the point when I can be confident in a shot like that. This is the level of training they teach at Front Sight. During both courses, it was pretty amazing to see how some people were on the morning of the first day and then see how well they were doing on the last day. Especially the women! I think they must learn how to shoot easier and faster than us! I really noticed the difference when I went through the Live-Fire Tactical Simulator on the 2-Day course compared to the 4-Day.

Earlier that day we had some training on how to clear halls, rooms and open doors. There wasn't too much focus on this as that is what their advanced courses are for but they do show you the basics which you can use to practice on your own. Going through the simulator was a lot of fun. It was a house split into two sections that you clear one at a time. After clearing each one, you review the targets with the instructor and he tells you how you did, what you should have done here, etc. I was pretty proud of myself. I had no missed shots, no innocent kills, no hostage kills and most of my necessary head shots. Some of them I placed higher on the forehead or lower on the chin which isn't in the target area. During my first 2-Day course we did just one room standing and I shot everything...and I mean everything. So within a matter of weeks I could see a drastic difference in my own skills. And I can owe all of this to Front Sight and the fantastic trainers they have on staff.

I'd have to give an A+ to every trainer they had there. Each one of them was very helpful while walking the line; helping everyone get into the correct stance, how to hold the gun properly, presentation…I can go on and on. Every question I had that would come up they had an answer for me.

Two of the more fun things we did were a night shoot and a target shooting competition. During the night shoot, they taught us how to properly present with a flashlight in hand and fire. I remember Mr. Bishop asking me, "Does it hurt [your shoulders]?" I said, "Yes, sir" and he said, "Then you're doing it right!" That's just because you are using muscles you don't normally use to keep the isometric tension in this technique. The instructors also showed the class the difference in low muzzle flash rounds and regular rounds. I didn't even know there was such a thing as low flash rounds so that was pretty interesting. The competition we had was an accuracy and speed contest. They randomly selected two people from the class to shoot against each other. The targets were metal and the first one was a grey metal hostage with a white plate representing the hostage taker. You had to present from a holster, get the hostage taker shot, hit an outside metal target at about 15 feet and another one inside at the same distance. The fastest to hit all three without hitting a hostage wins. I lost as I hit the hostage but it was pretty fun. The winner of the 3 handgun courses going on that weekend went heads up and our range won. The winner was a guy that was in the Army. He was something called Military Intelligence? Anyway, he was pretty damn fast!

Something I didn't think about much before attending Front Sight were malfunctions and reloads. We covered them both in the 2-Day and 4-Day courses but more in the 4-Day course which included them in the skills test. They covered Type I, II and III malfunctions as well as tactical and emergency reloads. I now always carry at least an extra magazine on my support side.

The last two days of the 4-Day course we presented from concealment. I think every other person had a vest but I asked if I could just put my t-shirt over since I was there with my Taurus Millennium Pro PT140 with a Comp-tac C-T.A.C IWB holster. That was fine with them and they said that was better anyway since that's how I pretty much carry every day. Train how you fight, right? You won't ever see me with a vest on unless I'm fly-fishing. So that was really good to finally see how it was to PROPERLY present and fire from concealment. On the last day you take a skills test. If you want to go for a graduate or a distinguished graduate, you have to take the skills test presenting from concealment. The skills test covered pretty much all tactics they trained us on throughout the weekend from presentation, different firing drills with different time limits and distances and malfunctions. I think I was pretty close to a graduate certificate but I dropped a magazine doing a tactical reload and missed a couple of shots completely. I managed to nail every one of my malfunctions although I did have a few blood blisters on my hands by the end of the course. That's mostly because of the small gun that I'm using but with practice I don't do that much anymore. But by the end of the course, you can safely and easily draw your weapon from a CONCEALED holster and fire two sighted shots to the center of a target 5 yards away - all under 1.5 seconds! And that's pretty impressive to me.

After taking both of these classes, I was extremely happy that I signed up for a lifetime membership. I know I will be going back as often as possible. I actually switched a scheduled Edged Weapons course for a Handgun Skills Builder course that I'll be taking on June 16th and 17th. From what they tell me, the Skills Builder course is like the 4-Day course with no lectures so it's all on the range. I'd recommend at least taking a course at Front Sight if not actually getting a lifetime membership and keeping your own training up to date. You will definitely feel more confident in your gun handling skills especially if you carry every day. Hopefully, I'll see you in my next course!

For more information about Front Sight just visit their website at www.frontsight.com.

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