



## Episode 813: Second Amendment Women

Guest: Shari Spivac

**WOODS:** You're in New Jersey. How long have you lived there?

**SPIVAC:** I've been in New Jersey for over 15 years.

**WOODS:** Okay, so more than long enough to know that New Jersey is not the first state people think of when they think of the Second Amendment.

**SPIVAC:** Absolutely.

**WOODS:** Okay. So can we start there? Why don't we think of New Jersey that way? What kind of obstacles do people face in New Jersey? Are they onerous or just annoying?

**SPIVAC:** I would call them onerous. The processes to acquire a firearm in New Jersey is very long and difficult on the applicant. There's a lot of paperwork that has to be filled out. There's a lot of waiting periods in some towns. You go through your local police department. References are required. It's quite a difficult process.

**WOODS:** So how long have you been a gun owner. I assume you're a gun owner?

**SPIVAC:** I definitely am a gun owner. I've been a gun owner for close to ten years.

**WOODS:** Did you have some — I don't know your personal back story, so I'm asking you this as somebody who doesn't know any of this stuff. Did you have some moment, something that happened to you or maybe an ideological transformation or something that made you go from being a non-gun owner to being a gun owner?

**SPIVAC:** I did. I was never opposed to gun ownership. I really probably didn't think about it much at all. After 9/11 I became a mother. I have four kids now. I became very concerned about things that were going on in the world, and I'm divorced now, but my husband at the time had said, Maybe you'd be interested in finding out about owning a firearm. So I took a class probably close to ten years ago, and I just really enjoyed it on many levels, and I decided to — that's when I found out about the crazy process that you have to go through in New Jersey just to purchase a gun. It took me probably six months to get my first handgun. And from there that was just history. I enjoyed it a lot. I kept taking classes, and I decided that I wanted to become an

instructor, because I wanted to be able to share the knowledge and introduce my friends to shooting, and I wanted to do it in I guess what you could call a proper manner with some kind of format.

**WOODS:** So you are president at Second Amendment Women Shooting Club. Tell me about that.

**SPIVAC:** So several years back I was taking a lot of classes and going to the range pretty much by myself most of the time, and I really didn't see a lot of women here in New Jersey at the range. It's definitely changed now in New Jersey and certainly across the country, but I was really looking for other women just to shoot with. And I took a class — they call it a Low-Light/No-Light class — with my firearm, and it's always a class full of men. This woman walks in; her name was Sandra Muldoon, and I was so excited to see her. We became friends that day, and a couple years later we started this club together.

**WOODS:** So the club, is it to help people — is it to train them, or is it to get them knowledgeable about — What do you want to accomplish with it?

**SPIVAC:** The club is both a social kind of environment for women — we get together monthly at the range that's close to me, the Woodland Park Range, although we have started branching out to some other areas in New Jersey, but that's really our main range and our home place. And we can get anywhere from five to 20 women that will come one night a month to get together to talk, to share firearms, just to have a good time. And at the same time we also do intro classes for women, both in firearms and in self-defense: pepper spray, Krav Maga-type training, because Sandra is a Krav Maga instructor. And it's just kind of an all around, both instructional and kind of social group.

**WOODS:** Self-defense sounds pretty unobjectionable, and yet I'd bet you run into a lot of people who think there's something vaguely wrong with you for wanting to do what you're doing.

**SPIVAC:** You definitely run into those types of people, all over I'm sure, definitely here in New Jersey. I mean, our general idea — I can speak for myself for sure — is that I feel that I cannot ask somebody else to protect me, that I really have to be able to do that myself, both for myself and for my children, so I need to be knowledgeable in how to do that. And we kind of share that information with the other women in the group, which I think most of them would agree as well, that they can take responsibility for — the onus, if you will, of their protection is on themselves first.

**WOODS:** All right, so you're involved primarily in the training end of things. You're not involved so much, let's say, in the ideological rabble rousing that is associated with the Second Amendment a lot of the time. That is important too, but if we had only rabble rousing and no training then we wouldn't be in very good shape. So you focus on that end. And tell me again how long you've been doing this?

**SPIVAC:** I've been an instructor for I think about six years, and I mean, I've been training friends and small groups of mostly women. But with the club I believe we're

starting our third year now of regular events. And although we're not a political group, anybody who's of course involved with the Second Amendment and especially in New Jersey, definitely we support it, and we try to get the women together.

And of course if you're my neighbor and you're a female and you don't know the facts about shooting and you hear people talk about how guns are dangerous and all of that, it's easy to side that way, so through our training we bring women in, we let them take their first shots with us for a very low price. We try to keep it as low as we possibly can. It's just \$15 to come and shoot with us if you're not a member of our club at our monthly meet-ups, and it's only \$10 to come if you are a member, which it's only \$25 a year for the membership.

So we bring women in who've really never touched a firearm in their life. They really just don't have any idea about what it means to shoot a gun. And they get to experience that, and they get to take their first shots with us and get the real facts of what it is, and a lot of them, most of them, do come back for more, although we do have a couple of people who have not come back – very few. But they've all told me, like, now they understand, and they're not opposed to other people who want to own guns. And that's a big win for the Second Amendment community.

**WOODS:** Oh sure, sure. And I think, as you say, if people just come out and have some hands-on experience, and they see that the, if we want to call them this, Second Amendment or gun community, are not the boogeymen they're portrayed as in the media, I think that does peel away some of the resistance. What are you seeing in terms of numbers? Has your club stayed roughly the same or grown? What have you seen?

**SPIVAC:** The club has grown tremendously. We have a tremendous amount of support from within the 2A community, sending women to us, husbands that want their wives to come; we've got a lot of single mothers. And we actually have a bunch of kids' events. Safety is a huge, important factor in the firearms community. People say a lot of things about firearms, but the truth is safety is the number one thing that you teach people when they come to shoot for first time. And yeah, we have many kids' events too, several a year. So it's really a family thing. The Second Amendment community is a very warm community. People look at it and they think we're all rednecks or whatever, but it's a huge, warm, family-oriented community. And that's really also what we want to put out there.

**WOODS:** Before we go any further, what's the website for you guys?

**SPIVAC:** It's [SAWSHootingClub.com](http://SAWSHootingClub.com).

**WOODS:** Okay, so Second Amendment Women is SAW, [SAWSHootingClub.com](http://SAWSHootingClub.com).

**SPIVAC:** Yes.

**WOODS:** Okay. I was reading one of the letters I guess you wrote to the club back in 2015, and – let's see if I can get it. Yeah, this was your anniversary message. And you noted that you had recently been at a local event, and one of the panelists was with a

group called Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. And so I looked at that, and I thought, All right, well, a big, long clunky name like that; there must be some clever acronym. But it just spells out MDAGSA, so I don't even know why they chose that (laughing). I thought it was going to spell some clever word. It spells nothing.

**SPIVAC:** (laughing) Right.

**WOODS:** So anyway, what are they trying to say? I mean, I know you stay out of the politics, but my show is very much into the politics. They're trying to say that people like you are actually making women and families less safe, not more safe.

**SPIVAC:** Yes. That's what they are saying, and I want to say very clearly that I am a mother. I have four children. And many of the women in our club – in fact, most of them are mothers as well. And these mothers that demand action, they do not speak for us. They come out and they say this is what women want, and we're not safe if other people own guns, and that's just absolutely false. And we try to come out as much as we can when we see the events that they have, these large events, to show up and to speak our side: that you do not speak for us. We want to defend ourselves, we want to defend our families, and we're going to fight for that.

**WOODS:** I genuinely have a hard time actually understanding their point of view. I mean, I suppose they're referring to items they see in the news of high-profile shootings, but this is like deciding not to fly because you saw that there was a plane crash a year ago. This is very much not the norm. And to the contrary, I always think of the following scenario: there's somebody breaking into your house, probably with the intent to harm you, and you can either get your gun and defend yourself, or you can sit there and pick up the phone and wait for the police to come take your picture of your dead body in 45 minutes.

**SPIVAC:** Absolutely.

**WOODS:** I don't even see what they're having trouble seeing here.

**SPIVAC:** Absolutely. They have all kinds of statistics that they say, that it's more dangerous for women, that they're more likely to be injured with their own firearm. But yet you see that all these victims of domestic violence – In fact, there was one recently in New Jersey. I wish I could remember her name. It was just even I think a couple of days ago. And when it's restrictive and women cannot own firearms, they're more at risk, I believe, than if there is a firearm in the home. And if you're being trained – and that's what we're here for. We're here to help women become trained. We're here to help them protect themselves – why not have that tool available to use if you're comfortable using it? Why is someone else telling me I can't have that tool available to use in my home to protect myself if that's what I'm comfortable with and that's how I want to protect myself? Like you said, I don't want to sit here on the phone, cowering, waiting for the police or someone to get here. I want to take responsibility for my own safety and my own family's safety.

**WOODS:** Can you tell me what Dry Fire Challenge is?

**SPIVAC:** The Dry Fire Challenge, sure. It's a page that I started with a friend, James Calida —

**WOODS:** Who is a member of — I think he may have been one of the people who urged me to feature you. He's a member of my special private Facebook group here, and I was just doing a search for your name in that group, and I somehow missed this post, where he told me about the Dry Fire Challenge. So tell me what that is.

**SPIVAC:** So one of the things about learning to shoot your firearm accurately is to have a great muscle memory. So when you pick up the gun, for example, when I pull it out of my safe at 3 o'clock in the morning, when I'm all disoriented because I've woken up and I hear someone breaking in, I want to be able to feel comfortable where my hands are on that gun and how I'm firing it and that my shots are coming off appropriately. Now, you can't go to the range every day. Most of us do have families or jobs or something that's keeping us from getting there, plus it can get expensive to shoot a lot.

So one thing you can do at home is that you can completely clear your firearm — and if you don't know how to do that, then you should absolutely take a class with a local instructor and learn all the gun safety rules. And once you know that your gun is clear and you're pointing it in your safe direction in your home, you can practice your trigger press, your stance, and all of that, over and over and over again. And that's what the Dry Fire Challenge is. They call it dry firing your gun when it's completely unloaded, and you just practice that at home. And if you do that — a lot of the competition shooters will do that also — it really has been proven to improve your accuracy and your muscle memory.

So we started that challenge. Everybody says they want to do it, but nobody ever seems to be able to find the time. So we're hoping that the page grows and that people will come to the page for different scenarios that they can try at home and to encourage people to dry fire, and to encourage the two of us to dry fire.

**WOODS:** So the challenge is to try to do it daily?

**SPIVAC:** Yes, that's exactly the challenge.

**WOODS:** Okay, I see the Facebook page. Is there a website?

**SPIVAC:** There is, but it's not fully functional yet.

**WOODS:** Okay, so we'll wait. When it's ready I'll let everybody know. Okay, so given that I have almost no — I'm all in favor of gun rights, and I think it's great, and one of these days I'll get up to speed with it, but I don't have much experience with guns at all. So when you and your group get together, are you just using your own firearm that you would use in self-defense for the sake of practice, or do you mix it up and use different firearms from time to time?

**SPIVAC:** We absolutely mix it up. I know when I go to the range I always try to — whatever guns I'm bringing with me are whatever guns I might be shooting that belong

to a friend; there's also rentals at most of the ranges. I also bring my home defense firearm with me, because I want to make sure that I practice at least a few magazines full every time I'm at the range if I can. But it's also a sport, and it's also a fun, social time with friends, so we do a little bit of both.

And it's also really nice, because once you buy a gun it's basically — there's no backsies, you know, there's no returning it. So when you're buying a gun for the first time, really getting the chance to fire it is how you're going to decide what you want, because I can walk into a store, and I can buy something and think that it's right for me and do all the research in the world, and then when I bring it to the range I can say, Oh, this wasn't what I thought. So the group is really nice, because everyone brings what they like and what they own, and then you get to try them. And that's actually how I ended up purchasing one of my firearms. I couldn't decide between a variety of different small handguns that I wanted, and I got to try a whole bunch of them and choose the one that I thought I would like, and it turns out I really did like my choice in the end, and I was happy for that opportunity.

**WOODS:** How long does it take to get any good at it?

**SPIVAC:** To be any good at shooting?

**WOODS:** Yeah, so that you have reasonable aim and stuff?

**SPIVAC:** I think if you have proper instruction, I think that you can be well under way after a couple of lessons and a lot of practice. That's really what it is, is a lot of practice, because there's a lot to take in when you first learn how to shoot. And like I said, the most important thing when I have people shooting for the first time is really safety. If they walk away from our night understanding the safety rules, that's key, but whether they hit their target exactly in the center is really not the goal of the first shots that you take. But I think that over not a long period of time you can become a very accurate shooter if you practice.

**WOODS:** What do you recommend when people say, I'm interested in learning shooting, I'm interested in getting a firearm for protection — what do you recommend they get? Is there a rule of thumb for that?

**SPIVAC:** (laughing) I thought you would ask this question, and the truth is — I could tell you would I like; I could tell you why I like what I like, but each person — Firearms are really very individual, and each person really has to be comfortable with the firearm that they chose. That's why trying it out is very important. I mean, there's different actions; there's revolvers; you could have semi-autos. There are different reasons for getting each of them, and that's why a class is very helpful, so you can learn the differences and what might work for you. There's people with different kinds of physical disabilities or weaknesses, and there's something they might be more comfortable with or it might be easier for them to shoot. There's different calibers; everybody has their opinions about that. So truthfully, I don't — I'll tell you this: a lot of women end up with like a Glock 19 or similar type of firearm for their first gun. I did. But that doesn't mean that that's the right thing for everybody. I really believe in going to the range, trying out the firearm that's going to feel right in your hand, because you're going to use the gun more frequently that you feel comfortable with.

**WOODS:** I see. Okay. So you've been involved in this for a number of years. You have a sense of what the political winds are and so on. But you don't do any political advocacy in the group in a formal way.

**SPIVAC:** Not in a formal way. I mean, when we do have other groups in New Jersey that are forming different trips to Trenton and things like that, we try to rally the group together; we try to carpool together. We're very involved with the other groups in New Jersey, with all the Second Amendment groups. We're really, like I said, a very close community. So we do work in conjunction with them. I mean, each person – I mean, I wrote an article about this as well. I believe that each person has to do something that they're able to do. I'm a mother; I don't always have time to run out and go door to door or even to drive to Trenton. It's far for me. So what I do is I try to bring as many people into the Second Amendment community as possible, because the more mothers and the more families that I can bring in I think is just a bonus for us, and maybe they will have the time. Maybe they will want to write letters to their representatives. So it's not that we don't; it's just that's not our main focus.

**WOODS:** Yeah, totally. I totally agree. I totally agree. I feel like I've got a lot of things that I do that contribute to the cause, and they don't involve going door to door or stuffing envelopes or whatever. There's a role for everybody.

**SPIVAC:** Absolutely, there's a role for everybody.

**WOODS:** So I totally appreciate that. Now, when you say it's your function to try to bring more people into the community, how do you engage in outreach? What kind of techniques do you use, or what methods of outreach have you used?

**SPIVAC:** We do have a Facebook group and a Facebook page. They're both accessible through our website; I won't try to direct people to Facebook over the podcast, but –

**WOODS:** But I'll link to that. I'll link to your Facebook group on our show notes page for this episode.

**SPIVAC:** Okay. So we do have our public page, where we list events and things of that nature, and then we do have our private group, where we have probably over 400 members, mostly if not all women. It's mostly for women and people who help us and sponsor us, like ranges and gun stores and things like that who will make donations to us and help us continue to do the work that we do – ammunition and that kind of thing. So in our group, people who have come to our events will invite people to the group, and it's really that's our main focus. We also do other podcasts in New Jersey to reach out to other potential women to come join us. And we go to the NJ SAFE Conference, which was in July. We had a table there. Whatever we can do we do.

**WOODS:** Well, that's excellent. What have I left out in talking about what you do, or just anything to let people know about your group and what they can try to replicate where they live?

**SPIVAC:** I just feel that it's really important to — I'm a social worker also by training. I have a Master's degree in social work. I know that probably sounds weird to some people.

**WOODS:** So there are a lot of gun rights people you run into in your job?

**SPIVAC:** (laughing) Um, no. You don't generally see many. But I do understand about being single; I've seen domestic violence, how it affects people. There have been people who come to shooting classes who, the reason that they're there is they were, for example, held up at gunpoint, and they need to get past that. So there's a lot of reasons to be out there training people, and if you're experienced, or even if you're not experienced and you just want to bring firearms training to your area, seek out an instructor you can work with, I think it's really important to get as many people — especially women, but as many people behind the trigger as possible, because knowledge is really — you can't make a decision until you have the knowledge, and I think we have a lot of people out there against firearms, and they've actually never shot a gun before. And I think until you can say that you have that experience, how can you be against it?

**WOODS:** Well, you would think, and yet they are anyway (laughing).

**SPIVAC:** Yeah, I mean, listen: I understand the other side, but that's my feeling. My feeling is that people should at least try it, see what we're all about, see what our community is about before they go out and say that we're these awful, evil people.

**WOODS:** Yeah. You know, that is just good advice through all of life, and I have felt — I don't know; I had a really visceral reaction after Donald Trump won. I wasn't a big booster of Trump, but I didn't like Hillary, and after he won there were so many people who just said, Oh, well, tens of millions of people are just beyond the pale and terrible, awful; they hate people of different races. They drew all of these conclusions. I thought, these are the people who pride themselves on being so open-minded and tolerant, and at no time did they think, Gee, this is a real kick in the teeth. That really is a wakeup call for me. Maybe I need to get to know my fellow Americans and try to understand what makes them tick. Of course none of them did that. They just denounced them. And the same thing I think goes for people in the Second Amendment community. In other words: regular Americans. People just draw all kinds of conclusions about them, their intelligence; they're not as refined and sophisticated as the elites. And yet you get to meet them and there's nothing wrong with them. They're fine.

**SPIVAC:** We have absolutely a wide range of demographics of people who come to our events. We have from kids who come as young as eight to women in their eighties. We have all different kinds of professions: we've got teachers, doctors, lawyers, social worker, stay-at-home mothers; we've got retirees. It's also a diverse group of women. There are also diversity events that happen in New Jersey that are welcome for anybody.

**WOODS:** Well, let me ask you that. When you say you have a diversity of people, is another group of people you have — are any of them crime victims? Does that make them say, That's it; I'm going to go learn how to operate a gun? Or is that not the case?



**SPIVAC:** No, that absolutely is the case. We do have victims of domestic violence that are in our club. Actually, they've spoken out about it, and afterwards they have purchased a gun and they have taken training, and they do feel more comfortable now.

**WOODS:** Now, where in New Jersey are you?

**SPIVAC:** We're in Bergen County. We have most of our events at the Woodland Park Range, which is in Woodland Park, New Jersey. We've done events with the Garden State Shooting Center, which is in Lakewood, New Jersey. And you know, we hope to keep spreading out.

**WOODS:** All right, well, I'm going to of course link to your website; we'll link to your Facebook page. We'll also link to that page that we mentioned on Facebook before you get your website up —

**SPIVAC:** The Dry Fire page.

**WOODS:** The Dry Fire thing, yeah, so we're going to link to that. So those three things will be linked at [TomWoods.com/813](http://TomWoods.com/813) for Episode 813. And thanks for coming on here and letting us know what you're doing. I like to from time to time talk to people who are doing something valuable, making a contribution, that isn't directly related to a ballot box or signatures or petitions. You're actually just doing something and training people to, frankly, exercise more control over their own lives. That is an absolute, unquestionable good that you're doing, and I'm glad you're doing it. Thanks so much.

**SPIVAC:** Thank you very much.