

Scot McKay 0:01

In 1898, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Teddy Roosevelt came right here to San Antonio, Texas, to recruit the posse of rough and ready men who would soon be known as the Rough Riders. These men went on of course to help liberate Cuba from the Spanish. Roosevelt himself long a conservationist went on to be the governor of New York, Vice President under McKinley and of course, President of the United States. But what's often lost the history is his cadre of bold, motivated men were a diverse group, including both cowboys and Native Americans, law men science from Elite families and even Ivy grads. What they had in common was purpose and a sharp desire to feel alive with adventure. 122 years later, I issue the call from right here in San Antonio for a new posse of men who similarly seek to jettison the mundane in favor of a richer, more meaningful, Purpose Driven Life fueled by an adrenaline and plenty of oxygen. Now I'm certainly no Teddy Roosevelt myself, but I sense we all yearn for that full life of meaning and purpose. So I too, am not only forming this posse, I'm going into the trenches with you. This meeting of men is called unsettled and it starts on Monday, April 6, I hereby issue the challenge to join me along with the men who've already claimed their place. Go To [www dot mountaintop podcast, calm front slash unsettled](http://www.mountaintoppodcast.com/unsettled) to discover more. Now at the time I speak these words to you of course, the world is faced with the challenge of beating a global pandemic. That means most of us are spending more time at home, perhaps separated from friends and the business we've grown accustomed to as well. Gentlemen, even though we have this imminent challenge to help overcome as a global family, we also have a great opportunity we can seize an opportunity to realize how fast life can change and how important it is to exert influence and make solid decisions whenever possible. [unsettled](http://www.mountaintoppodcast.com/unsettled) uniquely gives you community and motivation toward living not just a purpose, but perhaps several purposes. Just like Roosevelt and other legendary men have all within the Digital parameters possible when we're all doing our part to weather this global storm from our homes. So as we flatten the curve I invite you to also ride the wave. Join me in a select cadre of modern day Rough Riders [www dot mountaintop podcast calm front slash unsettled](http://www.mountaintoppodcast.com/unsettled)

Edroy Odem 2:37

ah. From the mist and shrouded mountaintop fortress that is x&y Communications Headquarters. You're listening to the World famous mountaintop podcast. And now your host, Scott McKay.

Scot McKay 2:51

Alright gentlemen, here we are once again gathered together for another episode of the world famous mountaintop podcast. My name is Scot McKay at Scot McKay On Twitter real Scot McKay on Instagram, you can find us on youtube at Scot McKay on the web as always at [WWW dot mountaintop podcast](http://WWW.mountaintoppodcast.com) calm, and I also cordially invite you to join our happy group of purposeful directed men who wants to aim higher and do more in life at the mountaintop summit on Facebook. With me today is a new friend of mine with a topic that I think is absolutely so stone called perfectly in line with what we've been

discussing lately. And her name is Alison Pena, aka the bad widow, which I'm sure we're going to discuss the etymology behind that. And the topic is your is reinventing ourselves which Allison has done in her life and I've done in mine and I anticipate a wonderful discussion. Alison, welcome to the show.

Alison Pena 3:53

Thank you so much, Scott.

Scot McKay 3:54

Yeah, it's my pleasure to have you on your story is interesting on how you arrived. At being called the bad widow go ahead and share that with us.

Alison Pena 4:04

Okay, in October of 2015, my husband who I was with for almost 25 years, was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer. And the lifespan for that is six weeks to four months. And he lived 11 months, died in my arms at home in September of 2016. And in that time, just briefly, what we discovered was how to really live fully, because we say to ourselves, what would you do if tomorrow was the last day of your life, but we don't actually live that way. And living with someone for whom one day soon was going to be the last day of his life. And one day soon was going to be the last day of our lives together, changed everything for us

Scot McKay 4:58

to kind of remind We have the old Tim McGraw song live like you're dying. Mm hmm. Something like that, right?

Alison Pena 5:05

Yeah. There's a fearlessness that comes with it. And the doctor said, you know, slow down and relax and do less and we refused. We started knocking stuff off our bucket lists. And so my husband lived fully. He was a professional artist. He did his last painting. the Thursday before the Saturday he died at home.

Scot McKay 5:32

That's amazing. Yep. You know, I'm reminded of the story of Nat King Cole when he got a diagnosis of his own. That was a terminal illness. He went into the studio and recorded every song he ever loved. He spent most of his waning days in the studio, because he knew where his gifts were. He knew what he was here on earth to do. And he recorded every song of course, that can cause voices, one of a kind, and the world is grateful for that. I think that it's a fascinating story. And of course, movies have been done about that very topic. The bucket list. Yeah, with Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman. And it sounds like you know, your husband did the Lord's work and sliding in broadside and a cloud of smoke. You know, to quote Hunter Thompson. Exactly.

Alison Pena 6:19

Yeah, exactly. And, and for me, too, you know, I had on my bucket list to sing in cabaret shows. And in the time, he was dying, I sang on four stages, and to speak, the work that I do. And I did that on three stages. And then he literally died in my arms at home. It was just the two of us. I was getting a lot of pushback that that couldn't happen. People said you can't handle it. And I basically said, You have no idea what I can handle.

Scot McKay 6:57

Good for you.

Alison Pena 6:58

And at the end, he was asking me lots of questions. He said, you know, will you take care of my mom? Will you take care of my studio? Will you take care of my paintings? All these different things? And I said, Yep, yep. Yep. Got it. I'll take care of it.

Scot McKay 7:12

Wow. So that sounds like it makes you a good widow. Not a bad widow. What happened there?

Alison Pena 7:18

Yeah, so so after he died, after he died, what I found out was that people had no idea how to handle me. So if I burst into tears, they said, Oh, I'm so sorry. I made you cry. And especially in the early months, my sort of lash back from that was bullied me. I've got bigger problems than you. You weren't the one that made me cry.

Scot McKay 7:43

Yeah. Don't flatter yourself. Right.

Alison Pena 7:45

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And it kind of made me angry because

then I was responsible for their bad feelings.

Scot McKay 7:55

You know, one of the major issues with our Western culture that I call But I'm fine. How are you culture is when someone isn't fine, and they're not doing well. People don't want to confront their own reality by being bothered to socialize, or help comfort or even visit those people. When my own uncle was dying of cancer, my mom said, Don't bother him. He's not feeling well, you know, he doesn't want to see you. Yep. And I don't even know where that comes from. I mean, if you're spending your last days on Earth, knowing that these are your last days on Earth, the last thing I think you would really want is for people to avoid you. Yet that's what goes on in this culture, isn't it? And it's because of a kind of an inward thinking selfishness that people have that I don't want to be bothered with this ugly reality this other person's facing and therefore when people have tough diagnoses like that, and really bad news, in many ways, they go through it alone. They and their caregivers.

Alison Pena 8:59

Yeah. In all honesty, I'm not sure that's it. So for some people, they're they're scared of their own mortality. And they just think if they come near you when you're in that state, they're gonna catch it, or something weird like that. Right? Well, it's

Scot McKay 9:14

a virus. Sure. I mean, you know, and people who have like cerebral palsy or Muscular Dystrophy see that throughout their entire lives.

Alison Pena 9:21

Exactly. Yeah. But the bigger thing so so the bad widow, let me circle back around to bandwidth.

Scot McKay 9:28

Sure. We're all in pins and needles wondering how that came about.

Alison Pena 9:32

And I get a lot of pushback on the name. So people know me they're like, but you're nice. You're a good widow. You're a nice widow. No, I'm a bad widow. I decided I was gonna blow up all the assumptions that people had about who I was. Because what I found was that people started treating me like I was broken. And I felt like I was broken. This man I was with for 25 years loved for 25 years was suddenly gone. And I was looking at a wasteland the rest of my life, possibly alone. And that was so terrifying. I cannot even tell you.

Scot McKay 10:14

I'm gonna imagine.

Alison Pena 10:15

Yeah, you can't?

Scot McKay 10:17

Well, no, you're right. I can't. And I don't want to pretend that I've gone through what you do. I think that is unfair, you're absolutely correct. But I want you to know that I can definitely empathize with having your world rocked all at once that has happened in my life, and it leaves you feeling like, you know, it's not like I got my cheese moved here. It's like, I got the entire floor pulled out from under me, not just the carpet. I mean, everything has to change, things that I didn't even understand were ever even in play to be changed or suddenly no longer there. Right.

Alison Pena 10:53

Absolutely. And everybody has some version of this experience. So What I found is that every loss, every transition goes through basically the phases I had to go through. But the bad widow came about because I decided, and it's typical. I'm going to use you as an example, if you don't mind. I'm not

Scot McKay 11:14

being used Go for it.

Alison Pena 11:19

You said, You know, I get it. And a good widow would say thank you, or That's very kind. Because that's what we do. We go along, right. But that's not my experience. People actually don't have exactly the experience that I have not to invalidate all the experiences that you've had in your life, but you don't know this one. Right. And so a bad widow. As a bad widow. I started actually challenging those assumptions that people made about how to deal with me. And I started talking about better ways of doing it. So what I found was that people wanted to give me everything that I needed and wanted. They really did. But they were so scared, they would get it wrong, that they just step back. What don't you think that's natural? Absolutely. But the thing that was the thing that was enlightening for me was that they wanted to, but they wanted to get it right. They wanted to be a hero for me. And so what I began to do was I began to really, and this was the secret of getting through this and back to Whole Again, I began to start getting really, really clear with myself about what I wanted, and asking specifically, and asking so specifically that the people I asked could not get it wrong, and they were always a hero to me. And then what started happening was people started giving me what I wanted and needed, because they weren't going to harm me. I made the parameters so clear that they could get it done. And that was amazing. That was an amazing realization.

Scot McKay 13:04

In other words, as long as you give people parameters, they're sort of grateful that you were clear. Therefore, they don't have to guess anymore. And they don't have to even worry or concern themselves about getting it wrong, because you've done the legwork for them and making sure they get it right. Therefore, there's no guilt. There's no shame. There's no messing up. It's almost rather like registering for wedding. Yes. Right.

Alison Pena 13:28

It's an absolute Win win. Yeah. And that was that was magical. So I sort of began really making distinctions in all kinds of ways. When you are with someone. At the beginning, especially, there are

things that maybe you really love to do, and you give up doing as much because your partner doesn't love it as much. And you don't even think about those things. And after 25 years, when my husband died, I began to realize that some of the things I had been saying I loved for a long time, I actually didn't. And some of the things that I'd given up doing as much, I wanted to take back, and I started to do that.

Scot McKay 14:11

Well, you had the freedom to do so. Yeah. You know, I want to mention something before we move on, about this idea of people being willing to give to you. I've noticed that when people are generous, they're also better receivers, because they don't feel like it's an imposition upon other people to give to them. Because in their own lives, they find the joy in giving. Don't you find that to be true? When someone's real parsimonious about accepting gifts from people? They're generally pretty selfish themselves?

Alison Pena 14:40

Yeah, yeah. I think that they don't want to and I was scared of this. They don't want to incur an obligation. And what I really discovered was that gracious receiving creates an equal exchange. Of course, gracious, giving a gracious Receiving, and there's no obligation.

Scot McKay 15:02

Also, I think people want to give out of the goodness of their heart with no real ulterior motive when they see someone who's in need, especially in a need that scares the hell out of them. You know, it's like, oh, my goodness, I can't imagine what it's like to be in your position and I want to do something I want to help. Even writ large when there's a major catastrophe like a hurricane Katrina, you know, people pour out of themselves to help those people. Because they understand that, hey, look, this isn't about someone being greedy, or someone being opportunistic. This is where shit gets real man, these people need help, and I want to be there for them. And you had that moment in your life where something significant happened to rock your world. And the people who understand the people who get it, you know, people who know the deal, as one of my friends used to say, they understand that hey, when it's your turn To be given to, we want to give to you and as a person who has probably been generous in your own life, I'm guessing and you freely given to others over the course of your life, you were able to finally sit back and say, Okay, you know what, it's my time to receive and I need to help make it easier on these people to do what they actually want to do, which is help me out here. It's beautiful.

Alison Pena 16:21

Exactly, exactly. The the clarity and the specificity that was so key. So I'll give you an example. I'm going to spin it around to dating if that's okay with you. That's

Scot McKay 16:33

always fine with us. Spinning so hard that we're dizzy cuz you know, okay,

Alison Pena 16:40

I won't spend it so hard that you're,

Scot McKay 16:42

we're coming into this thing. So you know, straightness, level status.

Alison Pena 16:47

Okay, good.

So my husband died in 2016. And in 2018, I decided that I was willing to risk seeking love again. And it is honestly terrifying to have the person you love most in your life died in your arms, and then to open up to love again. And it felt like the biggest betrayal of all because it's weird being a widow. So I because I didn't choose my husband's leaving. I have a husband, and he's dead. Right? He's not here in this life for me. And I was unwilling to live alone, but I had I was a hot mess. Absolutely a hot mess. It was just under two years since my husband had died. I was still crying uncontrollably. It felt like it really felt like a betrayal to even want to go out with another man. And the idea of intimacy was impossible. I mean, I wasn't sure I could kiss someone, much less anything else but I decided I was going to try. The last time I had dated was 1992. When I was in my 30s, when my husband died, I was in my 50s way different way out of practice, no idea what I was doing. And, you know, I went to see a music show and I'm chatting with this guy by the bar, and he's complaining about his ex wife, and I'm standing there. And I'm thinking, when is the good timing to tell him that my husband is dead? Because that's kind of a conversation stopper. Um, so I decided to go on Bumble, even though online dating in 1992 basically didn't exist.



Scot McKay 18:47

Basically. I don't think online anything existed, except they are well, you know, like chat rooms for really geeky people.

Alison Pena 18:55

Exactly, exactly.

Scot McKay 18:57

compuserve right.

Alison Pena 18:59

compuserve

Scot McKay 19:00

Yeah, and prodigy. Yeah, there was no web yet. I mean, the first time I remember seeing web was late 94. That's right. No television commercials with go visit Toyota at <http://www.sedar.com>. That was 95. For sure. I remember it's right. Yeah. So I mean, yeah, this is a brave new world for you for sure to get online and and start dating. No doubt, oh

Alison Pena 19:25

my gosh.

So I decided on Bumble because Bumble left the initial moves in my hands. And I knew I was so terrified that I would need to go very slowly. And then the first so I set up my profile and basically I set up my profile and didn't worry about the other person. I just set up my profile trying to describe as clearly as I could, who I was, so that my idea was that someone who was attracted to To the person that I said I was would then resonate with me and connect with me. And I had very little He must be this, he must be that he must be this tall, he must have blue eyes, I did very little of that. That guy had no smokers and must love music. And that was it. But I had this context. I asserted that I had had an epic love affair with my husband. And that I was do a second one that I actually got to have that. And so the filter that I was

looking at dating through was, okay, who's the guy who's my partner in this second epic love affair. And it really opened up the field. And so I wrote the profile I said, things like that were very specific, like prefer rocky beaches to Sandy once, and it was really to make clear that if the guy's thing was Going down to the shore every weekend, sandy beach, not my guy. And I'm sure there's someone out there for them, but not my guy. And so I wanted to be clear, like what I was saying about making requests about who I was, so that they could know who I was as clearly as I could describe it and say, Yes,

Scot McKay 21:23

well, authenticity is in short supply on online dating apps nowadays.

Alison Pena 21:29

It is.

Scot McKay 21:30

Yeah, you know, I think there's a teachable moment here that we can address. And that revolves around the idea of what it's like to date, widows and the trepidation that guys have about doing that, because you've alluded to it slightly, but I definitely don't want to let all this water pass under the bridge before we really hit it with a big heavy hammer. And that's this. Guys don't know what to do with a widow. Because as you mentioned earlier, we've never gone through that. Or, you know, if we do I think we have a better representation on how to handle But the vast majority of us out there dating are either single, never married, or divorced. And it's difficult for a third party to wrap their head around the fact that you're not angry at your husband, except maybe for the fact that he died and left you. You don't have an axe to talk about. This isn't your ex husband. This is the deceased love of your life. And guys get caught between not getting that at face value. Or the other extreme of thinking you probably have a shrine set up to this dead guy and you're basically still worshiping Him and He can't get a word in edgewise. And there's no way he's going to have an entree into your life at all. So why bother? And the reality of it and please comment on this. But in my 14 years as a coach, what I've noticed is that when people are widowed, you mentioned this, you actually touched upon this. They didn't choose to be single again, right. It was thrust upon find them to be single. And they're used to being in a relationship they liked relating. And it's not like they need 510 years before they're ready to be in a relationship. Again, they were ready to be in a relationship until their their spouse passed away. Right still like being in a relationship, they're still relationship ready. It's just now we got to start all over. The other thing that wasn't in your experience, but I want to acknowledge for the guys who are listening is sometimes being widowed. And this is gonna sound really crass, but sometimes, being widowed is a relief for certain people in certain marriages. I know I dated a widow and they were inches away from filing for divorce because they couldn't stand each other. And he saved her the trouble by getting in a car

accident die. And that's something that's really unexpected. When a guy is dating a widow or you know, for when a woman is dating a widower to hear that hey, you know what, don't Give it a second thought we were, you know, an odds with each other and it sort of was for the best. I mean, I'm sorry this person died. But it certainly isn't like I have that shrine in my living space to this person worshipping them. So every situation is sort of unique unto itself. And it's really patently a mistake to classify everyone who's been widowed under one heading, isn't it?

Alison Pena 24:22

Absolutely. In terms of stats there are widowed persons in the United States. 13 point 9,000,011 million are women. So it's, it's complicated. I mean, my husband left me 800 paintings, which I had to take home from his studio and bring home so my apartment is filled with my deceased husband's paintings. It's complicated. So anyone walking into my apartment literally saw the manifestation of my husband's life work everywhere.

Scot McKay 24:58

Well, that kind of candidate You're on the surface is that shrine? Hmm,

Alison Pena 25:02

it can, it can, but I didn't have the funds to put them in storage. And so I just moved them into the house. I moved a 500 square foot studio worth of paintings. And my husband sold his first painting when he was 10 into a 750 square foot apartment. And so the the man who wanted me had to be okay with that. And it wasn't a shrine, but it was a reality. Like I have this legacy of paintings that I need to figure out how to sell across the rest of my life. And I also have my own work to do. So being a widow, it's not, it's not anger, as you find with someone who's divorced, it's grief, but the grief is rough to be in the face of there was. So I started dating on Bumble and there was one guy who fairly quickly rose to the surface and there was a day when we had scheduled a date and I was a hot mess. I think it was maybe our wedding anniversary or something like that. I mean, I had been crying most of the day. And I wanted to go out with this guy. I liked this guy. But I was not sure that he was up for dealing with me in the state that I was in. So I called him up. And I said, Look, I really want to go out with you tonight. But I'm not up for anything really big. This is what's going on. It's my wedding anniversary. I've been crying all day. I do not know if I'll cry when we get together. It doesn't have to do with you. It's not your fault. Are you up for this?

Scot McKay 26:36

By the way? I think that's a fair question. Absolutely. And kudos to you for actually presenting it.

Alison Pena 26:42

Well, I mean, my feeling was he was an adult, and it was my responsibility to be clear about how I was and if he was willing to do that, for him to go in knowing all of it and not being responsible for it. The other thing that I said was you know if we're getting together. I want to let you know how to deal with me. If I cry. I said, you don't have to fix me. I'm okay. And I might cry. I don't know. I don't know how I'm going to be I've been crying all day. He said, That's okay. I can deal with you as a hot mess. I mean, I'm with an amazing man.

Scot McKay 27:20

Is this the guy you're with to this day? It is. Well, good for both of you.

Alison Pena 27:25

Yeah, he just kept standing and kept being patient. And for me, I needed to keep making distinctions because my body was not trustworthy. My body had known the skin of my husband for 25 years. Nobody else felt right.

Scot McKay 27:40

It was significant that he chose you, wasn't it?

Unknown Speaker 27:45

Yeah. He.

Alison Pena 27:48

When we first went on Bumble, I answered him, his name's Wayne. And I said, you know, it's it's such a hot day. It was July I think I'm going to go see this movie or that movie, and Would you like to get together someday? And he wrote back and he said, Let's go to a named one of the movies I had said, and let's have some day be today. And I typically had really long text conversations with people because

I was terrified. But I thought, wow, this guy is saying that he's willing to do what I've said I wanted to do today,

Scot McKay 28:21

while he listened. You know, we don't harp on finding a man who listens. And a lot of men, unfortunately for themselves, and for the women who could have been in their lives read that as this woman's trying to get me to obey her commands, but that's not what women mean. They mean, how can you know my hopes, dreams, once fears, how can you lead? How can you be a man who steps up and has a plan? If you don't know what plan would be in my best interest? If you're not listening, you'll never know. So he listened. Then he made a plan that you wanted, and he was glad to be the provider and preside over that plan. And you felt safe and protected. And then the rest is history. And by the way for that to be going on in New York City, is from what I understand pretty rare nowadays in the hustle and bustle that one gets lost, especially with the political correctness we see. And you know, the future is female, we should be deferring to women. And the women are like, Yeah, well, you know what, I'm a captain of industry, and I do big things of work. And I've got mental toughness, and I'm powerful, but I'm still sexually turned on by men who act like men. That's still okay.

Alison Pena 29:29

Yeah, right. Right. Yeah, exactly. And, you know, we then alternated dates or days for about getting to know each other. So he would plan one and then I would plan one and we learned about each other. But I really had to be clear about because I literally couldn't stand to be touched sometimes. So this is the widow question. If I was super sensitive to touch, I would say Don't touch me. And then I would explain as best I could. And it was visceral. I was only a couple To the height of my husband, how he felt next to me how his arm felt to me how his kisses work. All of that was so imprinted over 25 years. It was really hard. And I had to be really clear with myself. And I think I do fault women with this. We say, Well, he should just know why.

Scot McKay 30:20

Absolutely right.

Alison Pena 30:21

Why, how how is that fair? I mean, how is that fair in any way? And so, I had to be really clear with myself if I felt revulsion, if I got that visceral kickback from just not being accustomed to being touched by anyone but my husband. Was it me? Was it him? Or was it us? Because I couldn't trust my own

chemistry wasn't reliable. So we went along for six months and at Christmas, we had been thinking we wanted to see more of each other and he, he had been thinking about moving into the city to be closer to me and I had been thinking about him moving in With me, but we had not had sex yet. We went away to Tarrytown for the weekend, I packed a red and white spotted pajamas, a negligee and hoped to get to naked by the end. I pressed up against my boundaries till I hit panic, then I would say stop, we would stop, do something else. Come back, continue touching each other and got through by the end of the weekend. But it was tough. Lots of tears. And End of story we live together.

Scot McKay 31:34

Well, he clearly adores you. And what did that do for you? it cause you to adore him. Look at all the adorable things he does.

Alison Pena 31:42

He is amazing. And I love him.

Scot McKay 31:45

Fantastic. You know, I love hearing these stories of two people who get each other getting together because that's so important. And it seems to me both of you are optimistic, generous people. You're optimistic because you wouldn't be dating wouldn't make another foray out into the dating world if you were not. I mean, by definition, I think that's a fantastic story. And I hope and trust that the guys who have listened to this episode have a lot more wisdom when it comes to widowhood in general. And specifically what to do if they find a widowed woman in their lives who they would like to get to know better and possibly date. Fantastic. What a tremendous service you've given to these guys and what tremendous value you brought to this show Allison, and I really greatly appreciate it and I want to send these guys to your website and guys, go to [www dot mountaintop podcast, com front slash bad widow](http://www.mountaintoppodcast.com). I still have a hard time thinking of you as a bad widow. You know, you seem like such a sweet lady sounds almost like Black Widow which is so poisonous sounding. But indeed [mountaintop podcast calm front slash bad widow](http://mountaintoppodcast.com) where they can find out more about you and your work and get even more insight into into this very important topic. Thank you so much for joining us today. Allison. It's been a wonderful episode. Thank you. And guys, if you haven't been to [WWW dot mountaintop podcast calm](http://WWW.mountaintoppodcast.com) just yet, click on the red button in the upper right hand corner and I will talk to you for free for 25 minutes. There's a new feature there where you can schedule that time on the fly, no waiting, no emailing back and forth with my admin. You can get on my schedule immediately and we can hash out where you are right now where you want to be that among other wonderful, wonderful features, like pictures of our guests, transcripts of each show, the YouTube version of each show and special reports that you can download

for free are all there for you at [WWW dot mountaintop podcast.com](http://WWW.dot.mountaintop.podcast.com) and until I talk to you again real soon. This is Scott McKay from x&y communications in San Antonio, Texas. Be good out there

Edroy Odem 33:57

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