



All in the fa

Three generations of Linda's family have caught the Zumba bug

Waltzing across the dance floor, hand in hand, we gazed into one another's eyes.

"I can't wait to marry you," I said to my fiancé, Alan.

It was 1968 and I was 23. I'd met Alan in Hobart, Tas, when I took up ballroom and Latin dancing seven years earlier.

Alan, 34, had started dancing as a teenager and was the Tasmanian Amateur Ballroom Champion. Dancing together, we fell in love.

After we married we decided to move to Brisbane, Qld.

We continued entering amateur dancing competitions and Latin dance was our passion. We were hooked.

Our first daughter, Sandra,

was born in 1970. Then we had three more girls Chaise, Kathryn and Diane. Life became so hectic we no longer had time to compete.

The girls loved to watch old Gene Kelly movies on TV.

"I'd love to dance like that," Chaise said one day.

The girls all took up ballet, jazz and tap dancing. I spent hours sewing sequins onto their costumes and coaching them for competition routines. Alan and I felt so proud watching them compete.

By 12, Diane was positive she'd found her calling.

"Dancing is the first thing I think of each morning. I'm destined to dance," she said.

"Go for it," I encouraged.

The girls were all very sporty too. Sandra played hockey, Chaise did aerobics, Kathryn was skilled at athletics and hurdles, and Diane played netball and soccer.

As the girls grew up, juggling their own family lives and careers, I was pleased they kept up dancing.

Though Sandra had four kids, she often worked out at her local Brisbane gym.

Chaise, a mum of two, taught and performed African dance, hip-hop and belly dancing in Brisbane.

Kathryn travelled overseas as a professional dancer before having her two kids. After settling in Cairns, she opened her own dance school.

Diane went professional too, even performing the can-can at the Moulin Rouge in Paris. Alan and I went to see her performing the famous high-kick routine. She was amazing.

The girls were always badgering us to keep fit too.

"Are you still going to the gym?" Chaise often asked.

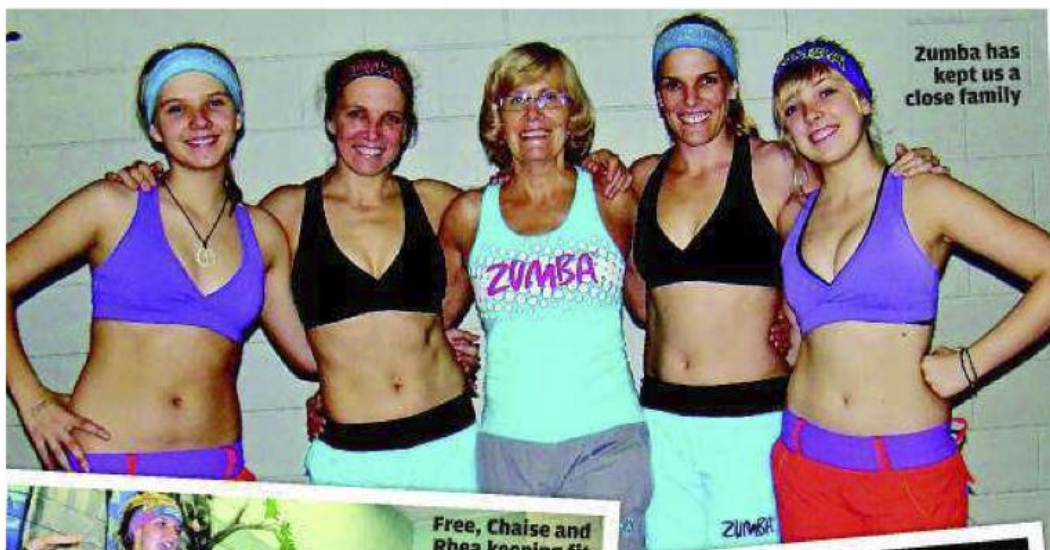
Though we weren't dancing as much as we used to, Alan and I went walking, swimming and performed Tai Chi.

One day in 2009, Chaise popped over.

"Have you heard of Zumba?" she asked.

"What is it?" I replied.

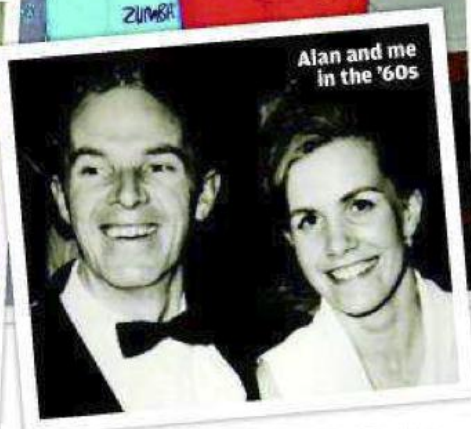
"You'd love it, it's a Latin-inspired dance workout," she said, explaining how she'd



Zumba has kept us a close family



Free, Chaise and Rhea keeping fit



Alan and me in the '60s

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started taking classes.

"It's like aerobics and dance in one - you basically party yourself into shape!" she said. I'd never heard of anything like it.

Chaise said it was a new craze. Her husband, Eric, 44, and daughters, Rhea, 18, and Free, 13, had done some classes too, and loved it.

Shaking my booty, I found Zumba came quite naturally to me

She also told her sisters all about Zumba.

"I've told Diane to find a class in Paris," Chaise said.

Before long, Chaise decided to train as a Zumba instructor, and ran classes at a local Gold Coast community hall.

She encouraged me to try it.

"It's addictive," she insisted. I'd always enjoyed Latin dance, so I thought it could be fun to try.

"Okay," I agreed. A few days later, I timidly entered

Chaise's class. There were 50 people there. Nervously, I found a spot near the back.

"Come up to the front, Mum!" Chaise called.

"It's embarrassing!" I said.

But as the Latin beats started, my fears melted.

Chaise had us all rotating our hips, leaping around the hall. Shaking my booty, I found Zumba came quite naturally to me. I was having a ball!

"You were fantastic!" Chaise praised afterwards.

"It took me back to my Latin dancing days," I panted.

I started attending Chaise's classes three times a week.

Then Kathryn, 35, trained to be a Zumba instructor too.

"She's caught the Zumba bug as well," I told Alan.

"I'll have to give it a go one day," he laughed.

By March 2010, I was definitely hooked, I'd shed a few kilos, toned up and no longer suffered from joint pain.

I was eager to learn even more about Zumba.

"I'm going to Sydney with Chaise to do the Zumba Gold course," I told Alan, 76.

"What's that?" he asked.

I explained it was a variation of the original Zumba, aimed at seniors like me. It featured modified moves to suit the needs of older participants. Chaise was training to teach it.

"It's not just for youngsters. Baby boomers like us can do it," I told Alan, when I got back.

"This really is becoming a family affair!" Alan said as he came along to Chaise's next Zumba Gold class.

"It's a bit daunting," he said, walking into the mainly female class. But as soon as he started moving he was smiling.

"It's a great way to keep our love of dance alive!" Alan whooped, throwing up his arms to the fast-paced beats.

When everyone in the family heard Alan was into Zumba, the craze spread.

Chaise and Kathryn both learnt to teach Aqua Zumba - a special program in a swimming pool. Kathryn also did a Zumbatomic course, designed for kids aged four to 12. To top it all off, Diane, 30, started her own classes in Paris!

Chaise's family stepped it up a gear too.

In 2011, Eric, 46, and Rhea, now 20, became instructors. Free, now 15, was joining in Chaise's classes.

Eventually Chaise and Eric turned their passion into a family business, called Zumba Fever, with Chaise as the lead instructor of their classes.

Recently, Kathryn took a Zumba Gold course and Sandra, 41, regularly attends classes.

I've now started teaching Zumba Gold classes with Chaise three times a week.

I hope that with me leading some classes, I can inspire other seniors to try it.

Sometimes the whole family practises together in the park.

But since Chaise, Kathryn, Diane, Eric, Rhea and I are now all instructors it's always a bit of a battle to decide who'll take the class!

Since the Zumba craze swept the world, all of our fitness levels have skyrocketed. It's a lifestyle.

It's not just a fun hobby, Zumba has brought us all closer together as a family.

I'm so happy we've passed our love of Latin dance down to the next generation, with a modern twist of course.

Zumba has helped make our family bond even stronger.

Linda Robertson, 66, Burleigh Heads, Qld.

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