Phyllis Erikson ’80 had raised five children as a stay-at-home mother and part-time teacher. At the age of 37 she informed her husband, Fred, a rhetoric and language professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute: “It’s my turn and I’m going to law school.” She was the second-oldest in her class and her determination and grit influenced her children, particularly her daughter, Dana Salazar ’05, who followed in her mother’s footsteps. So did her son, Frederik Erikson ’99, senior vice president and legal counsel at Webster Bank in Waterbury, Conn.

“I took a tour of Albany Law and kind of fell in love with the place because it felt like home,” recalled Salazar. “I teased my mom that it was a lot easier for her when she went to law school because she had five kids around the house to help her with her housework and I only had one.”

Although they attended Albany Law in different eras, mother and daughter kept up a good-natured competition. “My mom finished No. 6 in her class and she liked to remind me of that,” Salazar said. “We both had about 240 students in our classes and I was No. 5 going into my last semester. I thought I had her beat. I was prepared either to gloat or to be humbled. It turned out I came in No. 6. We tied.”

Mother and daughter pursued divergent paths in their legal careers, but they recently joined forces. In January 2015 they formed a law practice, Salazar & Erikson, based in East Greenbush, N.Y. “It’s a bit of a throwback to start our own firm,” Salazar said. “We’re hanging out a shingle like lawyers did in the past upon graduation from law school.”

The practice capitalizes on their respective strengths: Salazar handles a range of litigation and her mother focuses on commercial transactions. “I like working with Dana because she’s really smart,” Erikson said. “We have different talents and we combine them to be a full-service law firm.”

While at Albany Law, Erikson was recruited by the lawyer development program of the General Electric Co. “The majority of the GE lawyers came from Harvard, but the second-largest group was from Albany Law,” she said. “We held our own against the best of them because we had been very well prepared.”

Erikson’s 16-year career with GE carried her from the steam turbine division in Schenectady to silicone and plastics divisions and assignments in Europe. The couple lived in Belgium, a short commute to her office in the Netherlands, and her two youngest children lived there for a time.

“It was the best job I ever had,” she said. She left GE to work as general counsel for 10 years at J.M. Huber Corp. in Edison, N.J., a manufacturer of silica for toothpaste, food additives and a wide range of engineered materials. After retirement in 2006, she traveled widely with her husband, including extended stays with her relatives in Italy until Salazar made her an offer she couldn’t refuse. “I was happy with the idea of going into practice with my daughter,” said Erikson, who plans to work a couple days a week initially. “She has a good business sense and clients like her because she’s very practical.”

After graduating from Albany Law, Salazar clerked for two years for Susan Phillips Read, Associate Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. “It was wonderful,” she said. She left to take a job with Jones Day in New York City, a large firm that meant “working on a small piece of a big case for a very long time and focusing completely on that.” She decided to return to Albany and worked at Tabner, Ryan and Keniry, where she got satisfaction out of working on a case from start to finish and handling a variety of cases.

In starting a law firm, she has drawn upon her experience in business management for Paychex, the payroll service company. She also “loves the battle of litigation.” She said Albany Law provided her with “scholarship, friendships and connections that continued long after law school.”

She and her mother enjoy returning to their alma mater for lectures and alumni events. Salazar’s daughter, Emma, is a high school senior who may become a third-generation attorney. “She says she’s not interested in law school at this point, but she’s done two years of mock trial and I think she’d make a good lawyer,” Salazar said. Of course, she’d have to try to beat a No. 6 class ranking.