



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Residents and volunteers clean up on Oct. 1 after the French Broad River flooded downtown Marshall. The Madison County town is about 25 miles northwest of Asheville.

Marshall residents dig out of the mud

They know Helene has forever changed their NC town

BY RYAN OEHRLI
roehrli@charlotteobserver.com

Fran Randall peered into a comic book and board game store in downtown Marshall.

“This is the kind of business we never thought we’d have,” he said, studying the damage inside.

Randall, 61, is a sixth-generation native of Marshall, a Madison County town with fewer than 1,000 people. He grew up on a hill just over downtown, which had bloomed since 2008 or so into an “artsy” sort of place, he said. There was a bike shop, a bar with live music, art galleries and even a tattoo parlor.

But the old Western North Carolina character was still there, like a place to buy bib overalls.

“It’s kind of weird being in that generation that saw old and new,” he said Tuesday. “Now, I’m about to see what’s next.”



Fran Randall



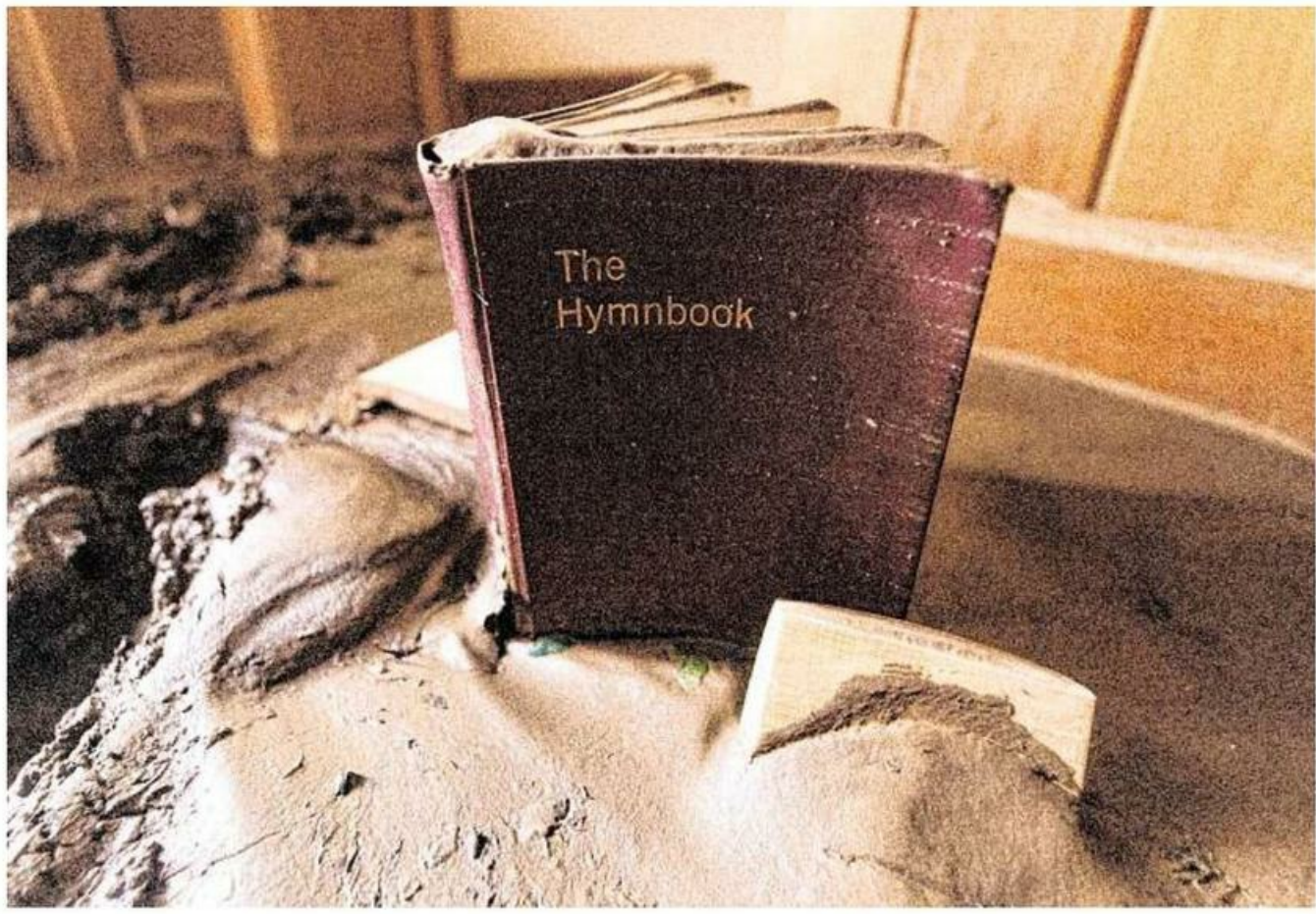
TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Downtown Marshall, photographed Oct. 1, lies between cliffs and the French Broad River. After Helene, residents came together to dig out mud that caked the streets and buildings.



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Ken Garrison, left, and Jacob Golden of Marshall help clean up downtown.



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Mud covers the interior of Marshall Presbyterian Church in downtown Marshall.



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Joe Freeman of Marshall helps clean up downtown.



TRAVIS LONG tlong@newsobserver.com

Ian Downes strums his guitar while taking a brief break from cleaning up in downtown Marshall. The Madison County town has fewer than 1,000 people.

Ryan Oehrli: @oehrli