An excerpt from “STORYTELLER”

By Robert Lewis

I am of Cherokee, Navaho and Apache descent. At the age of seven I heard my first traditional story and it came from my father, Yazzie Lewis, on a family vacation. We had stopped at a rest area and he brought our attention to the night sky and started telling about the creation of the Milky Way and why the stars are scattered across the sky. I had stories read to me by my mother, Lou Aline (Kingfisher) Lewis from books, but to hear an explanation for the universe while looking at the starry sky was an extraordinary experience and I never forgot it.

In the late spring of 2003 I was working at the Cherokee Heritage Center as a tour guide for the ancient village and had the opportunity to tell this story to a group of schoolchildren and parents waiting for a tour to begin. During the course of the tale, Barbara Girty, who at the time was in charge of group tours for the museum, heard me and so began this unique journey I find myself on.

In researching and gathering stories from elders, other storytellers, various books and magazines I began to discover the richness and variety of traditional knowledge and humor passed on from generation to generation.

The Traditional stories are a voice for cultural identity of a particular tribe’s lineage and heritage, a vital link to preserving the rich oral traditions and I find myself fortunate to be one of those storytellers retelling this knowledge and humor that has been passed down through time. I now find myself collecting stories and even creating new ones …

How does Mr. Lewis feel about being a Cherokee storyteller? Use examples from the passage to support your opinion.

How did the events in his life lead him to become a storyteller? Use examples from the passage to support your answer.