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The author writes: The two long pieces in this book originally came out in The New Yorker ? RAISE HIGH THE ROOF BEAM, CARPENTERS in 1955, SEYMOUR ? An Introduction in 1959. Whatever their differences in mood or effect, they are both very much concerned with Seymour Glass, who is the main character in my still-uncompleted series about the Glass family. It struck me that they had better be collected together, if not deliberately paired off, in something of a hurry, if I mean them to avoid unduly or undesirably close contact with new material in the series. There is only my word for it, granted, but I have several new Glass stories coming along ? waxing, dilating ? each in its own way, but I suspect the less said about them, in mixed company, the better. Oddly, the joys and satisfactions of working on the Glass family peculiarly increase and deepen for me with the years. I can't say why, though. Not, at least, outside the casino proper of my fiction.

His cloistered lifestyle and limited output have not prevented readers and writers from lionizing J. D. Salinger. With one-of-a-kind stories and the classic novel The Catcher in the Rye, he captured, with wit and poignance, a growing malaise in post-war America.