

THE LIZARD KING WAS HERE is an in-depth study of the high school years of Jim Morrison, the late lyricist-vocalist of the rock and roll band "The Doors" who died at the age of 27 in 1971.

THE LIZARD KING WAS HERE

By Mark Opsasnick

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REVISED EDITION

**THE
LIZARD KING
WAS
HERE**

A photograph of a bright green lizard, possibly a spiny-tailed lizard, perched on the word "WAS" in the title. The lizard is facing left and has its front legs resting on the top of the letter 'S'.

The Life and Times of Jim Morrison
in Alexandria, Virginia

MARK OPSASNICK

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BOOKS BY MARK OPSASNICK
CAPITOL ROCK
1996

WASHINGTON ROCK AND ROLL
1998

MISCELLANEOUS AND UNKNOWN
2000

THE CULTURAL BADLANDS TOUR
2001

THE MARYLAND BIGFOOT DIGEST
2004

THE LIZARD KING WAS HERE
2006

THE REAL STORY BEHIND THE EXORCIST
2007

ROCK THE POTOMAC
2019

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CHAPTER 1:

CONNECTORS

My interest in the Doors goes back to the early 1970s after collecting several of their studio albums and becoming infatuated with their spellbinding music. With the publication of the book “No One Here Gets Out Alive” by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman in 1979, I became aware that lead singer Jim Morrison had spent his high school years in Alexandria, Virginia, not far from my home in Greenbelt, Maryland. Immediately, I became interested in discovering how a teen so close to the nation’s capital ended up becoming one of rock and roll music’s greatest icons.

To acquire additional material on Jim Morrison’s life in Alexandria, I surveyed the many articles and books written about the Doors. Although a great deal of information had been published on the band, very little original research had been conducted regarding Morrison’s teen years. Extensive data on Morrison’s life in Northern Virginia was simply not available. To help fill this void, I decided to write this book.

In taking on this task, I decided my main objective would be to study the life of Jim Morrison in Alexandria and look for experiences that may have strongly influenced his later lyrics, poetry, and work as a performing artist. If the concern of biography is the human individual in all his aspects, it would be imperative to examine his various activities, endeavors, interests, as well as the environment around him and his relations with others. I would search for elements of experience, literature, and music that made lasting impressions on Morrison during this period. I believed the secrets were tucked away with his friends and acquaintances from that era, and from them I would extract information that would reveal the path that Morrison had followed to rock and roll stardom.

Ultimately, I wanted to create a unique and descriptive work that offered fresh material on Jim Morrison's life, as opposed to producing a book whose foundation was previously published quotes and worn-out anecdotes. It was my hope to recreate the individuality of Morrison and to provide new insight into an overlooked portion of his life.

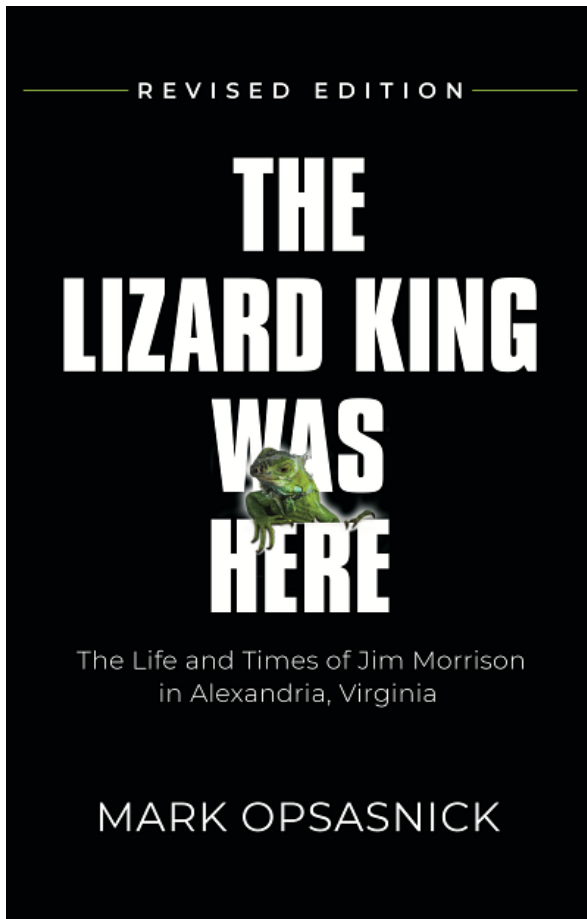
Jim Morrison has long been known as "The Lizard King," a title taken from the lyrics of a Doors song entitled "Not to Touch the Earth" from their 1968 album, "Waiting for the Sun." This song was part of a lengthy Morrison poem entitled "The Celebration of the Lizard," the body of which was printed in full on the album jacket's inside page.

In an interview conducted by Bob Chorush that was published in the "L.A. Free Press" on Friday, January 15, 1971 ("The Lizard King Reforms: Taking the Snake and Wearing It"), Morrison claimed "The Celebration of the Lizard" was an invitation to the dark forces, then quickly did an about-face and insisted it was all done tongue-in-cheek and that it was not to be taken seriously. Regardless of how one defines the nature of the Lizard King character, its emergence can be credited to Morrison's reported childhood fascination with reptilian creatures and served to poetically mesh the dissonant elements of man and nature into one supernatural entity.

For millions of fans, Jim Morrison was a controversial rock and roll star. For others he was a lyricist, a poet, and a performing artist who defied categorization. From a researcher's standpoint, I can only relate what I've been told by the people who knew Morrison during his teen years in Alexandria. From them emerged a complex portrait of a highly intelligent and tremendously creative young man prone to bouts of unusual behavior. While embarking on the voyage that led him to become lyricist-vocalist of the Doors, Morrison shaped his creative vision using various literary influences and personal experiences as inspiration. Without doubt, his time in Alexandria contributed to his overall artistic development.

The Lizard King Was Here

Today, the music of the Doors is celebrated by millions. While so many view Jim Morrison as a rock and roll superstar, a precious few in a private corner of the world knew him as a brilliant high school classmate, a talented artist, and an enigmatic friend. These are the people who once walked by his side, in his shadow, and along the pathways he created. For them, the streets of Alexandria, Virginia carry his spirit and offer a haunting refrain, “The Lizard King Was Here.”



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