In the first half of 2006, my brother Wik and I were busy preparing a small booklet commemorating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Haagse Jazz Club. For the brochure we had to interview all of the then still living, ten Honorary Members of the club.

At the end of our session, with piano player Hein van der Gaag, my address was inquired. Upon noticing “game inventor” on my business card, Hein, to my great surprise said, “That is funny. My father also invented same games. I should still have one somewhere in the house. It was a game called ACADEMIE and was published during the war.”

I was there to learn about Hein’s musical career, but now found myself wanting to know even more about his father’s games!

JAAP
Unknown Dutch Game Inventor
by Fred Horn
First version written in 2006, second version from April 2009 published as booklet for BoardGameStudies in Jerusalem. This third version was adopted and extended—May 23, 2016

I had had a copy of ACADEMIE in my game collection for a long time, but more important was its name had popped up during my research on the game of STRATEGO.

Both names were (together with De Zuid-Angelie registered as trademarks in the Merkenblad trademark journal) April 20, 1942 by ‘van Perlisten & Rooper Bosch N.V. te Amsterdam’ under the heading ‘Gezelschapjespellen (Family games) (See Addendum 1).’

Hein only knew of his father as a game inventor during the war years, and he could not remember any of the details, nor even any games other than ACADEMIE. He, on the other hand, did recall more clearly his father’s life-long fascination for the Bridge variant: BOMBAY BRIDGE, which his father had himself developed.

In order to gather more information, Hein referred me to his half-brother, Boudewijn, who had kept their father’s belongings. So I ventured up Noordwijk to meet Boudewijn. After a pleasant visit and a long telephone call to another half-brother, Richard, (Dutch Consul in Frankfurt am Main), I collected a lot of information concerning their father’s life, but very few details about his career as a game inventor.

Brief Biography
Jaap van der Gaag was born on January 7, 1905 in Utrecht and died in Leiden on February 7, 1988. His father owned a small brewery along with a pub for selling his beer. During World War I (The Great War) business was so bad that the brewery was forced to close and Jaap’s father had to look for work as a servant. The family was as poor as a churchmouse and young Jaap also looked for work to increase the family’s income.

At 14 years of age, Jaap sailed from Rotterdam (as an ordinary seaman) around the world, but after two years he returned home and finished school. He started studying geophysics at the University, but money was scarce and halfway through his studies Jaap quit and started a career as an oil prospector for the company Shell.

He moved with the firm first to Venezuela, then to the Dutch East Indies, and after being married in Holland, to Argentina. From there, after a short leave in Holland, he travelled back to Venezuela. At the onset of the war in 1939, Jaap and his family were caught by this event and had to stay in Holland.

Soon thereafter Jaap’s wife and their newborn baby both died of pneumonia leaving Jaap behind with two young sons. Hermina Bresser, his sister-in-law, entered the household to keep things going and later that year she became Jaap’s second wife.
By now Jaap was already deeply involved in the Dutch Resistance against the German occupier under his secret name “Richard.” After being let go by Shell (there wasn’t any work for him in Holland) Jaap started inventing and selling games in order to keep the household afloat and out of debt.

These events, along with his story during and after the war, are recounted in his autobiographical book “Vrijgevochten” (N.B. This word has a double-meaning in Dutch: 1) Free-spirited, and 2) Undisciplined), published in 1984 by Strengbult (ISBN 90-6010-590-7).

Twice in the book, Jaap refers to the games he invented. (See Addendum 2)

After the War, Jaap became an ambassador for the Netherlands, serving his last “post” in Havana, Cuba during the reign of Fidel Castro. After his retirement, Jaap returned to Holland and lived in Leiden until his death in 1988. (See Addendum 3)

N.B. Jaap also wrote down his story before WWII as a “concept” autobiography. However, it was never published. Boudewijn was kind enough to give me a copy of that concept and also a photo of the family from 1954. (See Addendum 4)

The Games of Jaap van der Gaag

In the review of his life in “Vrijgevochten” during World War II, there is no mention of the game ACADEMIE. Considering the fact three of his sons clearly remember the game as invented by their father, there can certainly be no doubt about the origin of the game and who invented it. One more reason to credit the invention to Jaap is the way the “introduction to the game” is written—the style and use of certain words are almost identical to the way Jaap wrote his autobiography.

Twice in “Vrijgevochten” Jaap refers to his games:

First mention: “...I was now deeply involved in the Resistance and contacts with the oil exploration were cut off. As a result

“Shell” scrapped me from their payroll so I had to find other sources of income. I found new income through inventing family games, a business with many opportunities on account of the Dutch people staying in their houses between ‘seven and seven’ at night.

(N.B. 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.)”

The game of ACADEMIE, its separate box and playing material.
I brought out one game after another; the games mostly disappeared in the files of a publisher, waiting for better times.

Together with folklorist D.J. van der Ven, I invented "ZWEEDRAADEN", a dancing game, and a farmer's game "VLEIEN EN TROUEN OP HET PLATELAND" (Courtship and Marrying at the Countryside), with Rie Cramer a children's game "DOOLHOR" (Maze); a drawing game "RABEJEK" with Bernard van Vlijmen, and the most striking one, "KUN JE NOD ZINGEN, SPEEL DAV MEE!" (If You Can Sing, Play With Us) in a direct cooperation with Holland's well-known J. Veldkamp.

More the pity that all the material and prototypes of these projects have been lost during the closing years of the War. Perhaps the games will surface somewhere in the future. What the Heil, there was enough money in to keep the household going without my income from "Shell."...

Second mention:

"...In the Netherlands I left a friend (Jaap tells about his time in Mexico after the War: "F.H.") with whom I shared my interest in folklore in a broad sense. Here I refer to the author of many books and papers on folklore and related subjects, Mr. D. J. Van der Ven, who helped me with his knowledge when I developed my family games like "AN VLEIEN EN TROUEN OP HET BOSKENSE", "ZWEDEHAI", "CARNEAL", etc. Alas, all the manuscripts disappeared...."

BOMBAY BRIDGE

This variant of Contract Bridge was surely Jaap's passion!

In early 1972, he wrote an extended article (in English): "What's Wrong with Contract Bridge?" Shortly before his death in 1988 he added some new ideas to this work.

In 1984, at his own expense, he published 2500 pamphlets (in Dutch) titled "Contract Bridge onder de Luifel." In it were rules for Bombay Bridge (in English). (See Addendum 5)

From "What's wrong .... ..."

"...It so happened that on that particular afternoon we had a session with some friends to impart them the rudiments of Bridge; Contract Bridge to be sure. This bridge class had existed only a few weeks and the students had just reached a stage in which they could not very well decide whether they should like the game or not. ...One of the 'students', who was sitting vacantly at a faraway horizon, suddenly said: 'I don't grasp this at all. Why don't you fellows simplify this game, so it can also be of use to dopes like me?' ...And thus began a period of experiments, of apparent successes and manifest failures. ...However slowly, very slowly, did it become apparent that the new offspring was viable. The day we put our new game into practice, playing for many hours without a hitch, was the day Bombay Bridge was born. This happened between Christmas and New Year's Eve in 1962 in the city that gave our game its name. ...."

For Jaap, Bridge was a game full of absurd and not so enjoyable habits, and up to his death he fought for his variant, as Bridge journalist Andre Boekhorst in 1984 described: "Van der Gaag presents his Bombay Bridge not as a remedy but as an exciting alternative. If the world of Bridge once can cope with this threat, our retired Ambassadore could well become a honorary member of the bridge community, which at this moment, only abominates him cordially."

COMBO

Jaap did not stop inventing games after the war. This can be affirmed through a letter from 'Clipper Games & Toys B.V.' dated July 16, 1981 in which they reject Jaap's game COMBO, saying: 'Commercially not a success in view of the experience we have with other number games.' (See Addendum 6).

Nothing more is known about this game as no material survived.

EENMAAL ... ANDERMAAL

(Once ... Once Again)

Jaap's son Boudewijn presented me with a box that included the test version of a game called "EENMAAL ... ANDERMAAL." He thought the item would be better preserved in my collection.

EENMAAL ... ANDERMAAL TEST VERSION

This is a game employing letter tiles. The aim of the game is to form words with as many of the letter tiles you control. An auction is held where players can buy tiles with their money. Words constructed with the tiles generate new funds for a player. One can also sell unwanted tiles out of his hand to other players. At the end, the player with most money wins. As far as I know this game has never been presented to a publisher.

MOORD (Murder)

Only one page with the Rules has survived for this family party game. (See Addendum 7).

The page was obviously typed at a later date (somewhere around 1970?) however, both Boudewijn and Richard clearly remembered the family playing this game when they were young. As far as they know, this game was invented by their father.

It is striking the game has a strong resemblance to the game "MURDER IN THE DARK" mentioned on pages 26 and 27 of the 'The Encyclopedia of Games' compiled by Barb Whiter and published in 2000 by Hinkler Books Australia (ISBN 1 8651 5867 4).

Any game Jaap van der Gaag saved anything about was always based upon his own ideas! So, in what strange way did some game idea travel all the way to Australia? Now that's only a "Real Mystery"?

PHILIPS CHILENA

Lastly, Boudewijn only told me the title of this game his father invented, as that was all he could remember.

Conclusion

The only real evidence of Jaap's authorship of board games is with the game ACADEMIE.

Besides this, there is the letter from Clipper about the game 'COMBO'; the test version of 'EENMAAL ... ANDERMAAL'; and all he wrote about Bombay Bridge, but these weren't board games.

Until the files of the defunct firm "van Perlisten & Roeper Bosch B.V." can be recovered and opened, there is a rumor that they may be stored in the attic of the daughter's home. No real information on these historical events will become public.

I do hope that on one of my lucky days in the future, one of the lost titles reported by Jaap in his autobiography will show up. As a collector and as a researcher it will 'make my day'!
More about the game ACADEMIE

The only published game by Jaap van der Gaag we know of is the game ACADEMIE. As already stated, the name of the game has been registered by van "Perlstein & Rooper Bosch B.V." in April 1942. We also know the name of the printing firm that produced the game.

From 1941, the Germans had ordered the complete registration of all paper and cardboard material. To maintain control, they introduced a system of numbering—the so-called 'Ken-nummers' or 'K-nummers': each printing firm having its own unique number.

On its board, box, and rules, ACADEMIE reveals the number K 1100 which correspond with the firm Mortelmans from The Hague. Unfortunately, these numbers do not give us the information about the date of printing.

Also, the relationship between van der Gaag and the director Sam van Perlstein (1884-1959) of the firm "van Perlstein & Rooper Bosch B.V." is not a part of Jaap's story in his autobiography.

We know from the registration in the Merkenblad the firm involved itself in games. Before the war it was the first license holder of MONOPOLY in the Netherlands (the history of this game, before and during the war in Holland, and the relationship to the firm Perry & Co is a story in itself), and they also introduced MAH-JONG in this country.

Sometimes it is inaccurately told that "HET BEURSPEL"—part of the collection in the Anne Frank House—is also in a v. P. & R. B. game, but this game was published by J. H. Schoonbeek from The Hague.

Being Jewish, van Perlstein was vulnerable in those days, but with the help from his son-in-law Mels de Jong he was able to pass and regain his trade firm in Amsterdam under his own control. Mels was part of the Resistance and Sam also tried to help as much as possible.

Both names came forward in a film about the DDR artist Werner Kleimek and his involvement as a German soldier in the Resistance group around Mels de Jong. We can only guess how the registered name ACADEMIE found its way to the game inventor Jaap van der Gaag and a printing firm in The Hague. Did they knew each other from the Resistance?

(N.B. 1—This same question can be said about the game of STRATEGO and its 'inventor' J. J. Mogendorff. Before the war, Mogendorff was working in the same kind of business as van Perlstein, so perhaps they knew each other and Mogendorff, being Jewish, was hiding from the Germans.

* With French game historian Michel Boustin, I am working on a complete (history of L'Attaque/Stratego where all these events will be included).

(N.B. 2—The strange thing is, that on the same date of registration, the third name for the game of De Zesdaagsche was probably never used for publication. Up to this point, no game with that name has been found.)

In the 1980s, the game of ACADEMIE was easily found in shops and markets. Perhaps someone found a warehouse with a lot of the games, because they were cheap and in mint condition.

Although I had tried to discover where the games had come from, no real information was (or could be) given by the sellers.

The idea behind the game of ACADEMIE has survived over the years. Some decades ago my friend and fellow-collector-game-inventor Kees Bogaart from The Hague used the idea for his game "DE BUZIEN QUIZ," specially developed for the firm 'Van Leeuwen Buizen.' >>
A family photo of van der Gaag in 1954. Iaap’s two older half-brothers, Lex and Hein are not shown in the photo. Lex, a pilot for the Dutch army, died in 1961 in an air crash over the North Sea. Hein became a well-known jazz piano player in Holland.

Pictured from left to right:
Richard
Berndina van der Gaag-Bresser (1911-1994)
Boadewijn
Maarten
Mirene (Miesje)
Jacob (Jaap) van der Gaag (1906-1988)
Roland

Addendum 6

A letter stating a number of people played “Combo” but didn’t deem the game a commercial success.

clipper games & toys b.v.

Addendum 7

Rules for MOORD (Murder) – Board game for at least 8 and a maximum of 14 participants.

**MOORD**

(Seizoenbepalings voor ondernemers 3 en zangers in deelnehmer)

**Beginspel**

**Begin**

**Spelregels**

1. Alle spelers mogen een aantal keuzes doen.
2. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
3. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
4. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
5. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
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7. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
8. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
9. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
10. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
11. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
12. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
13. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
14. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.

**Startspel**

1. Alle spelers mogen een aantal keuzes doen.
2. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
3. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
4. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
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11. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
12. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
13. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
14. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.

**Endspel**

1. Alle spelers mogen een aantal keuzes doen.
2. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
3. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
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12. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
13. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
14. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.

**Opmerkingen**

1. Alle spelers mogen een aantal keuzes doen.
2. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
3. Elke keuze moet worden getroffen na een korte discussie.
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