

## Graduate Spotlight

Every year, the International School for Holocaust Studies holds hundreds of educational activities, in a dozen languages, for over 300,000 students and educators in Israel and around the world. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what she has achieved since:



## Jana Třetinová Czech Republic

James Joseph McIntosh

■ **Jana Třetinová teaches eighth-grade History and Civics at the TG Masaryk Elementary School in Milovice, Czech Republic.** She attended an educational seminar at Yad Vashem in 2013, the same year that she discovered the names of a Jewish family from her town, the Geigers, most of whom did not survive the Holocaust. Inspired by her experience on the Mount of Remembrance, on her return home Třetinová embarked on a project to document the personal stories of the Geigers, together with her students.

Třetinová and her class first learned of the Geiger family when reading Blanka Rozkošná's book *Jews in Lysá nad Labem, Milovice and its Surroundings*. They discovered that Adolf, Ota, Viktor and Růžena Geiger were all murdered during the *Shoah*, but the book did not detail the circumstances of their deaths.

A search on a Czech-language website on the Holocaust yielded the names of the four Geigers and their dates of death. The class learned that the Nazis deported them to the Terezin ghetto and to Auschwitz-Birkenau, but they would have to dig deeper in order to learn about the life of the family before the war.

Their research ultimately led them to the local archive of Lysá nad Labem. "We were very lucky," said Třetinová, for the archive contained documentation from events in the lives of the Geigers, such as marriages and education. In addition, the records attested to the existence of a fifth member of the family. Zdeňka Geiger, previously unknown to Třetinová and her class, had applied for a marriage license in 1926, spurring their curiosity. "We were very interested," said Třetinová. "Who did she marry? Did she survive? Did she have children?"



■ Graduate *Jana Třetinová*

Třetinová then took her students to the Czech National Archives and the Jewish Museum in Prague, both of which pointed them back in the direction of their town of Milovice. The local archive there shed more light on the life of Zdeňka, confirming that she married a non-Jewish man named Jan Kolář in 1926, and listing the names of some of her acquaintances. One of them, a woman named Hana Černá, was still alive and agreed to speak with Třetinová and her class about Zdeňka Geiger-Kolářová.

The painstaking research carried out by Třetinová and her students culminated in a visit by Černá to their classroom. The Nazis deported

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Geiger-Kolářová to Terezin in January 1945, which she survived. After the Red Army liberated the ghetto on May 8, 1945, she set out to find her husband and was reunited with him. She had no children, and Černá served as her caretaker after Kolář's death in 1952. Geiger-Kolářová

continued to live in then-Czechoslovakia until her death in 1999.

Having amassed as much information as they could about the Geiger family, Třetinová and her class set about compiling the findings into a story of their lives. Drawing on archival records, historical photographs and oral testimonies, the students published *Kam zmizeli Geigerovi?*



■ *Třetinová's students created Stolperstein commemorating the Geiger family*

(*Where Did the Geigers Go?*), a book recounting the history of the last members of the Geiger family. In addition to the printed resource, the class created a website for their project, with written content, photographs and links. Finally, Třetinová's students took action to fashion a *Stolperstein* commemorative flagstone in memory of the Geigers. "The innocents who were killed must never be forgotten," said Třetinová. Educators like Třetinová ensure that the lives of Holocaust victims continue to be commemorated, and the circumstances of their deaths remembered for generations to come.

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