Edith Kaplan, art director, collector

Edith Jaffy Kaplan, 76, the first woman art director for an American advertising agency, died Dec. 9 in Philadelphia. The cause was cancer, according to her husband, Jerome Kaplan.

Mrs. Kaplan, a painter, sculptor and printmaker as well as a graphic designer, was employed by N.W. Ayer & Son from 1942 to 1953. In an interview a year before her death, she described Ayer, the country's oldest advertising agency, as "the Harvard graduate school of its time and its industry."

Mrs. Kaplan received her undergraduate degree in 1941 from Moore College of Art and Design. After graduating from Moore she pursued further academic work in design and painting at the University of Pennsylvania and studied printmaking with William Hayter at the Philadelphia Print Club.

Barbara Gillette Price, Moore's president, described Edith Kaplan as "a woman who was engaged in artmaking for her entire life, who lived each day to the fullest, and was an inspiration to generations of students."

At Ayer, Mrs. Kaplan worked on accounts for Plymouth automobiles, Yardley cosmetics and Sealtest ice cream. She won 12 gold medals and certificates of merit at art directors' shows in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia. She also won a gold medal for a portfolio of color woodcuts during Delaware Valley Printing Week in 1968. Moore gave Mrs. Kaplan its Outstanding Alumna Award in 1973.

Recent exhibitions of her work include a one-woman show entitled "The Image of Women in Western Art" at the Philip and Muriel Museum at Ursinus College in 1994 and another of her watercolors, collages and portraits at the University City Science Center in 1989. Her work was featured in a portrait exhibition at Moore in 1994, and in 1984 her metal sculpture and three-dimensional collages were exhibited at Hahnemann University.

Over the course of her career, Mrs. Kaplan taught at Philadelphia College of Art (now the University of the Arts), Community College of Philadelphia and Drexel University. She also lectured at Moore, Hahnemann and Temple University. Formerly vice chair of the Awater Kent Museum, she served on the board of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council from 1987 to 1993.

Mrs. Kaplan was also a noted collector of art deco posters. She purchased her first lithographed poster, "Nancy" by Paul Colin, on a trip to France in 1951. And for the next quarter of a century kept acquiring them at auctions, antique shops and an assortment of other venues in the United States and abroad. She said that "posters communicated the basic message of western industrialized society."

In addition to her husband of 42 years, Mrs. Kaplan is survived by a son, Paul, of Newton, Mass.

Regional magazine: Montgomery family

Montgomery Newspapers, the largest suburban newspaper group in the country, has acquired three national magazines, which combine to form the largest suburban newspaper group in the country. The acquisition of the magazines is the result of a recent merger between Montgomery Newspapers and the Woodmere Art Museum.

"These are the best examples of national magazines in the country," said Montgomery Newspapers Publisher Arthur W. Howard. "They target the fast growing communities of suburban Philadelphia and Chester County with high quality color publications that celebrate the history and traditions of suburban Philadelphia."

Both Howe and William Waite, publishers of the magazines, stressed that they will continue to serve the community with the same dedication to quality that has made them the best regional magazines by both Sigi Folio, the magazine publishing industry.