

Oldest woman U.S. veteran dies at 109

by UPI

HAGERSTOWN, Md. - Charlotte L. Winters, the last surviving female World War I veteran, has died at age 109.

Winters died last week in her sleep at the Fahrney-Keedy life care community in Boonsboro, Md., the Baltimore Sun reported.

Winters was the oldest woman veteran when she died, and she may have helped pave the way for women to join the U.S. Navy in 1916 when she called on U.S. Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels and asked him why women couldn't serve.

"She convinced him that women could be in the Navy and her visit is corroborated in his journals. While he did not admit that she directly influenced him, he did acknowledge that they had met," a niece, Kelly N. Auber told the Sun.

Daniels then discovered there were no rules against women serving.

"A year went by before she and her sister, Sophie Bean, joined the Navy," Auber said.

By 1918, more than 10,000 women had joined the U.S. Navy. Winters was assigned to the Washington Navy Gun Factory, or the Washington Naval Yard, where she worked during the war as a typist, the Sun reported.

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