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Boy, 15, Who Set Fire to Woman Committed to Mental Institution

A 15-year-old boy who had set fire to a "shopping-bag lady" was transferred yesterday to a state mental-health institution where he could spend from one to 10 years undergoing psychiatric treatment.

Court-appointed psychiatrists found that the boy, Fred Pleasant, was severely retarded. He has a record of 15 arrests involving sex crimes, burglary, robbery and larceny. A source close to the case said his criminal actions "appeared to be the acts of a retarded kid and not someone who intended harm."

The boy pleaded guilty earlier this week to tossing a lighted match on Katherine Moritz, 75, as she dozed in the IRT station at 34th Street and Seventh Avenue

last Oct. 12. The woman, who had two bankbooks with deposits totaling almost \$20,000, suffered burns on 20 percent of her body. She recovered and was released from a hospital to resume her nomadic life.

Justice Irving Lang of State Supreme Court in Manhattan will retain jurisdiction in the case until young Pleasant is certified as fit for release by the Monroe County Development Center, part of the State Office of Mental Retardation. He must remain under treatment for at least one year but not more than 10 years, which is the maximum prison term he could have received on his plea of guilty to a charge of attempted murder.