the Merck Institute for Therapeutic Research. The department has two assistant professors.

*Department of biochemistry*: professor and head of the department, effective 1 July, Raymond L. Garner, associate professor of biological chemistry at the University of Michigan School of Medicine.

*Department of dental anatomy*: ad interim appointment as chairman of the department, effective 1 July, Robert L. Lang, associate professor at the University of Oregon College of Dentistry.

■ A radio astronomy observatory is being established near Grafton, N.Y., by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on the 820-acre wooded tract that was left to the institute by the late John A. Sampson. The first installation, antenna and instruments for measuring the degree to which radio waves from outer space are absorbed in the ionosphere, will be open by early fall.

Another 6 months will probably be required to put into operation the second project, an interferometer for locating the places on the surface of the sun from which outbursts of radio noise erupt and for determining the subsequent movements of the outbursts.

Funds for initial development are a $5000 grant from the R.P.I. board of trustees, and a $10,000 grant from the Research Corporation, New York. In addition, the U.S. National Committee for the International Geophysical Year has invited the new radio observatory to be a participant in the IGY and has made $2000 available toward the expense of that participation.

■ More than 60 secondary-school science teachers, under the joint sponsorship of the National Science Teachers Association and the Connecticut Science Teachers Association, recently attended a 1-day institute that was presented by the staff of the New England Institute for Medical Research. The purpose of the special meeting was to inform the teachers about new developments in biology, chemistry, and physics and to demonstrate through a wide variety of experiments how the teachers could illustrate such trends easily and economically in their own classrooms.

■ The Southwestern Research Station of the American Museum of Natural History reports that at the end of its first year of operation 47 investigators representing 14 different institutions in 12 states have taken advantage of its facilities. The station was opened by the museum in the spring of 1955 as a permanent, year-round laboratory for research on the diverse fauna, flora, geology, and paleontology of the desert and semi-arid areas in the Southwest and in northern Mexico.

The station, which was established through the interest and support of David Rockefeller and then aided by the contributions of others, is located near Portal, Ariz., on the eastern slope of the Chiricahua Mountains, within the limits of the Coronado National Forest. A scientist making a trip from the base of the mountains to their crest would have to cross two different types of desert, a grassland, and a woodland before reaching the evergreen forests at the summit, thereby covering five different "life zones." The station is probably the only research laboratory that can provide such variety.

The research workers who studied there in 1955 represented nine fields of scientific inquiry: arachnology, entomology, mammalogy, ornithology, botany, parasitology, herpetology, paleontology, and general natural history. The station's quota of visitors for the coming summer has been filled for some time, but applications are still being accepted for the fall and winter.

■ Next fall Hofstra College will offer a bachelor of arts degree in geology. The college already offers the degree of bachelor of arts in biology and geology, and bachelor of arts in chemistry and geology.

## In the Laboratories

■ More than 1475 employees of the Radio Corporation of America are taking courses at colleges and universities outside working hours under the corporation's tuition loan and refund plan. Under the plan, employees may borrow the money to pay the tuition for college courses. The amount is refunded after the successful completion of the work. Employees who choose to pay for courses themselves also receive refunds when the work is completed. During 1955 R.C.A. spent $168,900 in education reimbursements.

■ A particle bank has been established by the Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, Calif., to aid academic, industrial, and governmental laboratories that require powders with known characteristics for their research activities. The preparation and standardization of such materials by individual scientists or laboratories often involve the expenditure of a substantial amount of time and money. After work with these standardized materials is completed, they are usually shelved or discarded.

The new particle bank will act as a depository and distribution center for these materials. Samples will be made available to interested organizations for a nominal handling charge. Information regarding donations and requests for information about the availability of powders with specified characteristics should be addressed to the Particle Bank, Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, Calif.

■ Stockholders of Baird Associates, Inc., and the Atomic Instrument Company, both of Cambridge, Mass., have approved a merger of the two organizations that is to take effect on 1 June. The new company will be known as Baird Associates–Atomic Instrument Company. Baird manufactures optical-electronic equipment and Atomic Instrument makes instruments and components for the electronic and nuclear fields.

■ The Atomic Energy Commission has announced an expanded program for the procurement of high-purity zirconium metal and hafnium oxide to meet the increasing reactor development requirements. To assure a future supply of the materials, 5-year contracts have been signed with three new commercial suppliers who were among 10 firms that submitted proposals: National Distillers Products Corporation, which will supply 1 million pounds annually from new facilities to be constructed at Ashtabula, Ohio; NRC Metals Corporation, a subsidiary of the National Research Corporation of Cambridge, Mass., which will supply 700,000 pounds annually from a plant to be constructed near Pensacola, Fla.; and Carborundum Metals Company, which will supply 500,000 pounds annually from a new plant to be constructed at Parkersburg, W.Va. The contracts call for the annual delivery of 2.2 million pounds of zirconium, subject to the availability of funds, at an average cost of about $14 million a year.

■ The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission has selected the proposal of the Babcock and Wilcox Company to design, fabricate, and operate a liquid metal-fueled reactor experiment. This reactor is the seventh type chosen by the commission for its research program to develop economical electric power from nuclear fuels. Other types are pressurized-water, homogeneous, fast-breeder, boiling-water, sodium-graphite, and organic-moderated. In addition, studies are under way on the gas-cooled reactor concept.

■ Beckman Instruments, Inc., has established a new data and control systems department in its plant at Fullerton, Calif. The department is managed by Taylor C. Fletcher, previously manager of Beckman's industrial instruments group.