At 90, Intrepid Curator Scour Desert for Plants

By Tom Moore

SAN DIEGO—A giant cactus with 3,000 needles
in a 40-foot stem is the reward for a lifetime of botanizing
by Mrs. Marguerite Bailey, 90, who retired
from the San Diego Natural History Museum
last year.

Mrs. Bailey, a native of Augusta, Maine,
has been in California since 1903 after
studying botany at Wesleyan University in
Middletown, Connecticut.

"I've always been interested in plants,"
Mrs. Bailey said, "and I've been collecting
them in the desert since I was a young
woman." She has visited the South-west
five times since her retirement, carrying
back specimens of all the flower varieties
she can find.

"I've been in California for almost 60
years," she said, "and I've seen a great
deal of change. The deserts have changed
as much as the cities. Now it's hard to find
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Mrs. Bailey has been a member of the
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dread, the moequitoes and the sandstorms.

"It's a job I love," she said, "and I'm not
done yet. I plan to go back and collect
more specimens this winter."