

by George Melvin

*Beauty*

The Southern Railway started buying diesels in early 1940 but seemed to get into the new swimming pool one toe at a time: it bought two EMDs, an SW1 and an NW2 in February 1940, then a pair of Alco S1s that fall. The following year, ten switchers joined the roster, from Alco, Baldwin and EMD. Like a few of the other big roads of the period, such as the Pennsy, there must have been strong support for continued steam operation. Road passenger diesels were also sampled in February 1941, and the first ones came from Alco. The two other neighboring roads in the Southeast, the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line, had acquired passenger diesels prior to this, but they were from General Motors, a single E3 for the ACL and E4s for the SAL in 1939-'40. At this juncture, both the six-cylinder EMD 567 and the six-cylinder Alco 539 were present on the property of the Southern, in the SW1 and pair of S1s. Perhaps this led the Southern to try out both EMD and Alco passenger cab units.

In February 1941, a pair of A-B sets of Alco DL109/110 units arrived. The cabs were numbered 6400, 6401 and the boosters 6425, 6426. The SOU indulged very briefly in the letter-suffix numbering for its road diesels. It soon developed the practice of starting a new block of numbers for the boosters just above the cabs units. In the 1940s and 1950s, separate number series were assigned to the Southern itself and its two major subsidiaries, the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific (CNO&TP) and the New Orleans & Northeastern (NO&NE). The CNO&TP used the 6000-6700 numbers and the DL109/110 sets were assigned to



Southern PA3 6902 is teamed with sister 6900 at Macon, GA, in December 1960, powering the *Ponce de Leon*, which consisted of only two passenger cars and six mail, express and baggage cars by this date. This angle offers a good view of the headlight arrangement of the PA3s. Though still in its original paint, the nose herald is missing on this unit. The arrangement of receptacles around the headlight is very similar to that used on PA3s built for the Southern Pacific. The unit has lost its fuel-tank skirting, a condition that appears common to the whole group. Note the extra-long grabirons above the windshields and small rear-view mirror by the engineer's side window. Decals: Microscale 87-62.

*Howard Robins photo*

these lines and numbered accordingly. They handled the *Ponce de Leon*, a Florida train that received connections from Chicago and Detroit off the NYC at Cincinnati and ran over the CNO&TP and SOU to Jacksonville where connections were made to the SAL and Florida East Coast to serve both coasts of Florida. Since the other Florida roads were dieselizing, perhaps the Southern didn't want to look behind the times! The

units were painted in a medium green and white scheme with a white panel along the side and lettered for the name trains they pulled. The following month, a group of 11 E6s started arriving; these would keep the Alco passenger unit fleet forever in the trailing position behind a growing fleet of highly regarded and long-lived fleet of E units.

Also in the spring of 1941, the CNO&TP received its first FTs for freight service,



SOU PA3 6902 is only three years old in this view at Chattanooga, TN, in 1956. Notice the chrome frame around the windshield, numberboard and kickplates above the steps into the cab. The nose herald is still in place at this time. The vertical grabirons beside the nose door have not been added. The dynamic-brake panel is visible on the roof, and the "NO&NE" sub-lettering is placed at the rear just below the grille. Decals: Microscale 87-62.

*Howard Robins photo*