

Parade honors 95-year-old carmaker

By DIANE NOLAND

STAFF WRITER

A parade might not be fitting to celebrate every 95-year-old's birthday — especially if the birthday boy is leading it — but Edward Sutton relishes the idea.

"I'm going to carry the Union Jack — I'm from England, you know," Sutton, who turns 95 today, said. "Other people will carry flags from their heritage — we have Italian, Greek, Swiss.

The La Selva Beach man said he was surprised but thrilled to learn from his friend Colleen Hendrick, who is organizing the parade, that there might be 35 people marching in his parade Saturday. He said he thought maybe five or six would accompany him on "a little walk."

"He's so special in every way," said Hendrick, who met Sutton just a year ago when he passed her house on one of his weekly mile and a half walks.

"He tilted his hat and said 'hello.' We started talking. He never has a negative thought," she said.

Hendrick invited Sutton to accompany her and her husband to church and then out to lunch.

"He will do anything you ask," she said. "I even asked him to dance and he did. He's such a gentleman. That's what he is. All the ladies love him," she said.

He's a gentleman — and a man interested in people, said his daughter-in-law, Betty Madrigal of Aptos, who was once married to Sutton's oldest son. Madrigal has remained a close friend of Sutton's for 40 years.

"He's a social butterfly. I get as far as saying, 'Daddy, would you like to go...' and he says, 'Yes!'"

Sutton goes every year with Madrigal and her family to the Graniterock Fourth of July celebration in Aromas, and they go out to dinner often. A long-time member of SIRS, Sutton attends the Santa Cruz chapter monthly luncheons and was official greeter for six years.

He's even planning to accompany a friend on a Mediterranean cruise in September, including stops in Italy, Greece and Turkey.

A craftsman by trade, Sutton has been active all his life.

At age 14, he began a five-year apprenticeship in coach building at Hoopers in London. The company built wood car bodies and chassis for Rolls Royce and Daimler. During World War II, Sutton worked on the Hammel car glider, used in the invasion of Normandy.

"It was as big as a twin-engine bomber and could carry a 10-ton tank in its nose," he said.



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Edward Sutton will celebrate his birthday with a parade Saturday.

But Sutton says the highlight of his early years was being on the team that built the "very first double-decker bus" in 1920 in England. Unfortunately, the prototype never made it to the streets of London — the design proved to be top-heavy.

Even though it's not "his bus" that he rides when he goes back to London to visit his daughters, he says it still pleases him very much that he can say he worked on the first of its kind.

Sutton moved with his family to the United States in 1956, first to Dearborn, Mich., where he worked on "Woodies" for the Ford Motor Co. Nine years later, he moved to Pasadena where he had his own business building classic cars. When he came to La Selva Beach in

1975, he continued to build cars in his garage until he retired six years ago at age 89.

"I built three Dusenbergs, four Lincolns, two Packards and one Cord," Sutton said.

The parade to honor Edward Sutton "for his long years and his love of life" will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday at the corner of Mar Monte Avenue and Playa Boulevard and continue to the bluffs, where a prayer will be said, songs sung, and perhaps a speech or two given, Hendrick said.

Then everyone will walk back to Hendrick's house for coffee and English scones.

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June 26, 1996