

Kauai copter crewman aids Viet escape

A 21-year-old soldier from Hanapepe, Kauai, was credited yesterday with helping several hundred South Vietnamese Rangers escape from a besieged outpost six miles inside Laos.

Army Spec. 5 Dennis Fujii, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fujii, had been stranded at a hilltop base called Landing Zone Ranger ever since Thursday when his medical evacuation helicopter was destroyed. He was crew chief on the helicopter.

TWO OTHER American copters were shot down in attempts to evacuate him. The crews were recovered but Fujii remained at the hot spot, under heavy North Vietnamese artillery, mortar and small arms fire. He directed AC-119 helicopter gunships and U.S. fighters.

Yesterday, still under heavy fire and carrying

some 100 wounded men, the South Vietnamese fought their way out.

Fujii, who accompanied the Rangers, suffered a minor mortar fragment wound in the left shoulder.

FUJII JOINED the Army shortly after graduating two years ago from Waimea High School, where he played varsity basketball.

According to his father, he came home on leave late last year after completing a one-year tour of duty in Vietnam. "He volunteered to go back again," said his father. "We didn't want him to, but that's what he wanted to do. It was his decision."

The elder Fujii said he and his wife were notified last night of their son's injury. "We're thankful it was not serious, but we'll be so relieved when he comes home for good," he said.