

Narrator: Fishermen in Maui were caught in a conflict between having to be out fishing while also needing time to sell their catch. They were also at the mercy of local markets that could dictate prices. A small group of fishermen banded together to come up with a creative solution to their problem.

William Choy: For me, I was the very first to fish over here ...The very first. Then, of course, with the other two guys I made this club and we are registered with the State. We are the only one doing that.

Jimmy Gomes: Because they was at the point where if you go to a market and you try to sell all that and you don't like the price, well, they tell you, hey, if you don't like it, go somewhere else. And the guy could just make one phone call, and there's no place and there's no place else you could go other than in the camp and sell your fish. Because the other markets, they get the call and they say, hey, even if we need the fish, we don't want it. It was either we band together or they continue doing whatever they want, giving us whatever price they want.

Basil Oshiro: So all this started -- what year was started,1968 when, Bill, you folks first start put in?

WC: Actually, I started the clubs.

JG: We had a meeting -- informal meeting at his house in Kihei, at Halama Street, in fact, that's where it was. And that's where Bill put in money, right? The coop ...

WC: Well, only three of us.

JG: Yeah, Bill and Bobby.

WC: Bobby.

JG: And Balthazar.

WC: Balthazar. I asked them to give me \$100 apiece -

JG: Yeah.

WC: So I can get my attorney to make out the thing.

JG: Yeah, that was the very start of the Coop. We're the only fishing coop in the State of Hawaii, I think.

Norman Tan: But the reason for the Coop was to have one place to sell our fish that would make that we would unload everything to one place.

Salvador Santos: When I first started fishing, okay, I went start fishing - bottom fishing as part-time, but I needed some place to sell. I joined the club. I would go out there Friday afternoon, come home Sunday and we had one place to sell the fish. I never had the experience of dealing with markets, or what. It was always there. I'm satisfied with what I get.

NT: But it's changed so many times already because . . .

BO: Because the Coop standings, it's turned more into a club standing. But they still have that part that we can still hold a contract with one of the wholesalers. But the wholesalers still kind of like leery. They say we're going to overfish -- flood them out. I say, no way, not -- the highliners almost all of them all, you know, giving up already. They're getting old.

NT: At one time we had at least what, five sampans? Or four? Yeah, the whole sampan row was out there at one time. Now, today there's zero. There's two guys just retired. Bill got his boat on the trailer in his yard. Sometimes we get carried away, start talking about the old times and then that becomes interesting the way they fish, what they went through. Like I remember one time Jimmy said he caught thousand pounds paka, and guess what, his hands was bleeding. You know, that's work. That's all hand, that's not machine. Nowadays it's machine now, that's what we hear, yeah.

JG: Your fingers were all . . . your hand . . . your fingers are all double- sized. Swollen. I mean, it's completely line-burned. This is what we used to do, okay. If you catching a lot say you caught a lot of fish and the fish stopped biting, you stop, you're going to rest. Okay. Then you're going to try when you go back and try to fish you can't close your hands because there's so much line burns. So this is the old days, when you take a bucket of saltwater and you go one, two, three and you shove your hand and it's ahh, the scream -- and your hands get soft again. Now you can fish. But you're going to take that pain. I mean, that's before Solarcaine, and all that. After a while we got smart and we started bringing creams and putting it on, and then, you know, rather than shoving your hand in saltwater. But back then was -- that's the only thing we knew and that's the only way you could get the grip on the line again because you really couldn't close your fingers.

NT: We didn't use too much gloves before. We used bicycle tube, and it works, yeah.

BO: So the new highliners, the younger generation, you know, supposedly if they can start going fishing every weekend, or whatever, they probably can do the same thing we do, we did, you know, the past 20 years ago. From what I gather, from what we do on the Cooperative Research, there's a lot of fish out there to be caught. But industry has changed, the fleet has changed. The method is generally the same, but the techniques they're using is different. But you figure out, they're still catching the same amount of fish. You know, if you go by catch per day, it's pretty close, within 50 pounds, I would say. So we still have a chance. But we don't have enough people actually fishing to flood any market.