Hi, my name is Frank, and I collect secrets. It all started with a crazy idea in November of 2004. I printed up 3,000 self-addressed postcards, just like this. They were blank on one side, and on the other side I listed some simple instructions. I asked people to anonymously share an artful secret they'd never told anyone before. And I handed out these postcards randomly on the streets of Washington, D.C., not knowing what to expect.

But soon the idea began spreading virally. People began to buy their own postcards and make their own postcards. I started receiving secrets in my home mailbox, not just with postmarks from Washington, D.C., but from Texas, California, Vancouver, New Zealand, Iraq. Soon my crazy idea didn't seem so crazy. PostSecret.com is the most visited advertisement-free blog in the world. And this is my postcard collection today. You can see my wife struggling to stack a brick of postcards on a pyramid of over a half-million secrets.

What I'd like to do now is share with you a very special handful of secrets from that collection, starting with this one. "I found these stamps as a child, and I have been waiting all my life to have someone to send them to. I never did have someone." Secrets can take many forms. They can be shocking or silly or soulful. They can connect us to our deepest humanity or with people we'll never meet. (Laughter) Maybe one of you sent this one in. I don't know. This one does a great job of demonstrating the creativity that people have when they make and mail me a postcard. This one obviously was made out of half a Starbucks cup with a stamp and my home address written on the other side.

"Dear Birthmother, I have great parents. I've found love. I'm happy." Secrets can remind us of the countless human dramas, of frailty and heroism, playing out silently in the lives of people all around us even now. "Everyone who knew me before 9/11 believes I'm dead." "I used to work with a bunch of uptight religious people, so sometimes I didn't wear panties, and just had a big smile and chuckled to myself."

(Laughter)

This next one takes a little explanation before I share it with you. I love to speak on college campuses and share secrets and the stories with students. And sometimes afterwards I'll stick around and sign books and take photos with students. And this next postcard was made out of one of those photos. And I should also mention that, just like today, at that PostSecret event, I was using a wireless microphone. "Your mic wasn't off during sound check. We all heard you pee." (Laughter) This was really embarrassing when it happened, until I realized it could have been worse. Right. You know what I'm saying.

(Laughter)

"Inside this envelope is the ripped up remains of a suicide note I didn't use. I feel like the happiest person on Earth (now.)" "One of these men is the father of my son. He pays me a lot to keep it a secret."

(Laughter)

"That Saturday when you wondered where I was, well, I was getting your ring. It's in my pocket right now." I had this postcard posted on the PostSecret blog two years ago on Valentine's Day. It was the very bottom, the last secret in the long column. And it hadn't been up for more than a couple hours before I received this exuberant email from the guy who mailed me this postcard.

And he said, "Frank, I've got to share with you this story that just played out in my life." He said, "My knees are still shaking." He said, "For three years, my girlfriend and I, we've made it this Sunday morning ritual to visit the PostSecret blog together and read the secrets out loud. I read some to her, she reads some to me." He says, "It's really brought us closer together through the years.

And so when I discovered that you had posted my surprise proposal to my girlfriend at the very bottom, I was beside myself. And I tried to act calm, not to give anything away. And just like every Sunday, we started reading the secrets out loud to each other." He said, "But this time it seemed like it was taking her forever to get through each one." But she finally did. She got to that bottom secret, his proposal to her. And he said, "She read it once and then she read it again." And she turned to him and said, "Is that our cat?" (Laughter) And when she saw him, he was down on one knee, he had the ring out. He popped the question, she said yes. It was a very happy ending.

So I emailed him back and I said, "Please share with me an image, something, that I can share with the whole PostSecret community and let everyone know your fairy tale ending." And he emailed me this picture.

(Laughter)

"I found your camera at Lollapalooza this summer. I finally got the pictures developed and I'd love to give them to you." This picture never got returned back to the people who lost it, but this secret has impacted many lives, starting with a student up in Canada named Matty. Matty was inspired by that secret to start his own website, a website called IFoundYourCamera. Matty invites people to mail him digital cameras that they've found, memory sticks that have been lost with orphan photos. And Matty takes the pictures off these cameras and posts them on his website every week. And people come to visit to see if they can identify a picture they've lost or help somebody else get the photos back to them that they might be desperately searching for. This one's my favorite.

(Laughter)

Matty has found this ingenious way to leverage the kindness of strangers. And it might seem like a simple idea, and it is, but the impact it can have on people's lives can be huge. Matty shared with me an emotional email he received from the mother in that picture. "That's me, my husband and son. The other pictures are of my very ill grandmother. Thank you for making your site. These pictures mean more to me than you know. My son's birth is on this camera. He turns four tomorrow." Every picture that you see there and thousands of others have been returned back to the person who lost it -- sometimes crossing oceans, sometimes going through language barriers.

This is the last postcard I have to share with you today. "When people I love leave voicemails on my phone I always save them in case they die tomorrow and I have no other way of hearing their voice ever again." When I posted this secret, dozens of people sent voicemail messages from their phones, sometimes ones they'd been keeping for years, messages from family or friends who had died. They said that by preserving those voices and sharing them, it helped them keep the spirit of their loved ones alive. One young girl posted the last message she ever heard from her grandmother.

Secrets can take many forms. They can be shocking or silly or soulful. They can connect us with our deepest humanity or with people we'll never meet again.

Voicemail recording: First saved voice message. Grandma: It's somebody's birthday today Somebody's birthday today The candles are lighted on somebody's cake And we're all invited for somebody's sake You're 21 years old today. Have a real happy birthday, and I love you. I'll say bye for now.

FW: Thank you.

(Applause)

Thank you.

(Applause)

June Cohen: Frank, that was beautiful, so touching. Have you ever sent yourself a postcard? Have you ever sent in a secret to PostSecret?

FW: I have one of my own secrets in every book. I think in some ways, the reason I started the project, even though I didn't know it at the time, was because I was struggling with my own secrets. And it was through crowd-sourcing, it was through the kindness that strangers were showing me, that I could uncover parts of my past that were haunting me.

JC: And has anyone ever discovered which secret was yours in the book? Has anyone in your life been able to tell?

FW: Sometimes I share that information, yeah.

(Laughter)

(Applause)