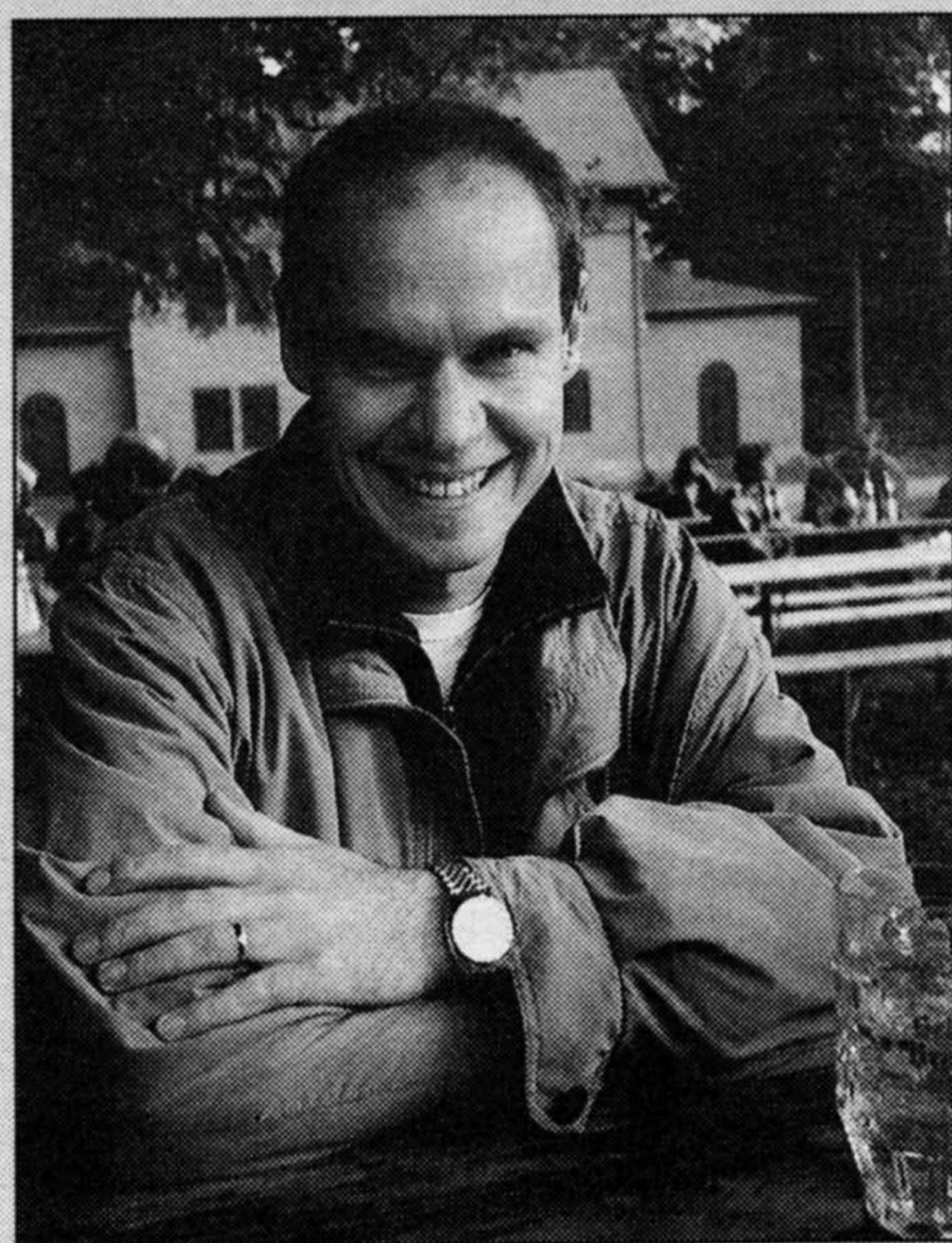


## GOLD MEDAL

# "I feel like Forrest Gump" says top grad

HEINZ BAUSCHKE STILL CAN'T BELIEVE he's won the governor general's gold medal as Simon Fraser University's top graduate student.

"I feel like Forrest Gump," he says, referring to the movie character who always happened to be in the right place at the right time. "I keep asking myself 'Is it really me who's won the medal, or have they made a mistake?'" laughs Bauschke.



Bauschke

No, there's no mistake, as a glance at Bauschke's academic record confirms. While doing his PhD in mathematics, he published eight papers, earned glowing praise for his thesis from respected mathematicians, and firmly established himself as a rising star in his field.

That's not bad for someone who ended up at SFU by accident. Bauschke, 32, earned his first math degree at Goethe University in his native Germany.

From there, he could have gone into banking or the insurance business, but both sounded dull. Instead, lured by childhood memories of Jack London novels, he set his sights on Canada.

Bauschke began his graduate studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax. That's where he met mathematician Jonathan Borwein, who introduced him to optimization theory (how to make things the best, biggest, quickest, etc.). Intrigued, Bauschke switched his thesis topic and followed Borwein — who became his supervisor — to the University of Waterloo, and later, to SFU.

Within the university's new centre for experimental and constructive mathematics (CECM), Bauschke completed his thesis on data reconstruction methods, with applications in medical imaging. The centre provides a very useful link between the world of math and the real world, he says. "It's one of the top spots in Canada to do modern mathematics, especially on computers."

Bauschke graduated last October and is now back at the University of Waterloo for two years of postdoctoral studies. After that, he and wife Stefanie — who are expecting their first child in August — hope to return to B.C.

Bauschke would like to teach at a university, preferably one sitting atop a mountain in the Lower Mainland. "SFU is a very dynamic and innovative place," he says. "There's still a strong spirit of building things." ♦