

FIRST GLANCE

Conley to hear Amrine case

By **BOB WATSON**
News Tribune

Retired Boone County Circuit Judge Frank Conley has been named to hear the new proceedings in the Joseph Amrine case.

The appointment by the state Supreme Court was dated Tuesday, the same day Cole County Senior Judge Byron Kinder granted a motion for a change of judge in the case.

Kinder had presided at Amrine's original trial in 1986, when the then-Missouri State Penitentiary inmate was convicted of the Oct. 18, 1985, killing of fellow inmate Gary Barber.

Cole County Prosecutor Bill
See AMRINE, page 6

☆ Amrine

From page one

Tackett called Conley "one of the most revered and respected circuit judges in the state of Missouri by trial lawyers. His reputation for fairness is impeccable."

Tackett launched the new proceedings against Amrine earlier this month, after the state high court ruled April 29 that Amrine's attorneys had demonstrated their client's possible innocence.

Tackett said June 12: "I'm trying to find the truth, and if the truth exonerates him, fine. But if it doesn't, that's different all together."

Barber was stabbed in a prison recreation area.

Amrine always has claimed he was playing cards in another recreation room. Some witnesses, including a corrections officer, supported that claim. But three witnesses testified that Amrine was the killer. They later recanted that trial testimony.

As Conley takes over the case, among his first duties will be considering a change-of-venue

motion by Amrine's legal team.

The lead attorney, Sean D. O'Brien of Kansas City, filed a motion June 18 seeking a change of venue for any new trial because "the likelihood of obtaining an impartial jury here (in Cole County) is minuscule."

O'Brien's motion noted "an unusual amount" of pretrial publicity in the case, including some that "has illustrated the innocence of Mr. Amrine and problems with the judicial system in Cole County that put an innocent man on death row."

He said the Cole County jury pool contains "innumerable family members and friends of individuals who are part of the system that has been vilified" in the reports of Amrine's innocence.

"Acquitting the defendant of this murder would further the notion that their own community's members committed dire mistakes of judgment in the original prosecution of Mr. Amrine, whereas a conviction would ratify the behavior of their community."