When I was a kid sometimes I would stretch the truth a little if I thought it might get me out of trouble.

Whenever my grandfather caught me doing this he’d always say, “I think you’re telling a story.” That was kind of a gentle way of saying, “You’re lying, and I know it.”

These days I might could get away with responding that I wasn’t “telling a story.” I simply “misspoke.”

It seems I’ve been hearing that word a lot lately, and it isn’t coming from children hoping to avoid a spanking. Most often it’s coming from politicians who’ve been caught telling a bald-faced lie and hope the voters will be gullible enough to believe it was merely a misunderstanding and allow them to continue feeding at the public trough.

One particularly despicable example is the recent episode in which Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, who has ambitions of serving in the U.S. Senate, was exposed as a liar when he claimed to have served in Vietnam. Although he is on record referring to his service in Vietnam and even once described what it was like to return home from the war to an unappreciative public, reporters later discovered that he actually never set foot in Vietnam. Blumenthal has tried to explain that he simply “misspoke.” The worst part about it is that some people seem to believe him.

Of course when it comes to politics, sometimes telling the truth can get you into trouble.

I hope that isn’t the case for Yazoo code enforcement officer Danny Neely, who admitted during Monday’s meeting after being grilled by the city council that city workers did not follow through on dealing with a dilapidated property because the mayor stopped the order.

The ongoing saga of the city’s inability or unwillingness to tackle the problem of nuisance properties has been a source of frustration for many citizens for quite some time. I’ve had numerous conversations with residents on the issue, and we’ve often tried to figure out what could be the source of such ineffectiveness. Many have speculated that some of our elected officials are probably standing in the way of the process because they’re afraid of losing votes, afraid to stand up to irate lawbreakers or doing favors for friends.

Neely’s comment Monday gave some weight to that theory.

Fortunately the board said that one man can’t stand in the way of the process. I hope each member feels that way when the issue arises in their wards.

Of course they could always just say they “misspoke” when they said they were in favor of enforcing the ordinances.

.....

Jason Patterson is the managing editor of The Yazoo Herald. He can be reached at 746-4911 or by sending an e-mail to managing1@bellsouth.net.